A LOSING HAZARD

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BY

COURTENEY GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE LADY LORRAINE."

"O! . . . . region all too fair
For self-delighting fancy to endure
That silence only should inhabit there,
Wild beasts, or uncouth savages impure!
But, intermingled with the generous seed,
Grew many a poisonous weed;
Thus fares it still with all that takes its birth
From human care, or grows upon the breast of earth."

ARTEGRAL AND ELIDURE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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A LOSING HAZARD.

CHAPTER I.

"Not of a woman's tenderness to be,
Requires nor child nor woman's face to see."

CORIOLANUS.

FOR many weeks Doctor Saltichus had been labouring hard to establish a small hospital at Franewyk. There were many cases of illness among the English workmen, partly occasioned by the climate, partly by the nature of the work on which they were engaged, and Saltichus, in despair at the wretched temporary houses in which his patients had to be treated, had

conceived the idea of collecting them altogether under one roof, where they could be better tended, and better nursed by some experienced and careful hand, than by the thoughtless ignorant women to whom the task generally fell. Warmly seconded by Randolph and by Lisa van Franckenburg, who thus met once again on the old ground of working to benefit others, his efforts were now successful. Contributions and subscriptions poured in both from Dutch and English inhabitants of the district; Roeland gave a house, till a better one could be built, or till it were certain that it might be desirable to build one, and a committee of ladies undertaking to visit and inspect the hospital was formed. This list was headed by the names of the Baroness van Franckenburg and Mrs. Randolph, while the post of treasurer fell to Randolph.

Just at first Saltichus had found it up-hill work. There was such a prejudice against

himself, that anything he proposed was almost sure to be rejected; but he had soon gained Randolph's ear—Randolph who always forgot personal feeling in the general good—for when he unfolded the scheme to him with all the advantages accruing both to patients and himself, the saving of time, the saving of journeyings to and from the more distant cottages, the benefit of having medicines and instruments so ready to his hand, the patent advantages to the poor people themselves, who would have good fare and every necessary—then Randolph had hesitated no longer, but had given him the benefit of his powerful influence, and had worked with him hand and glove in the plan. Lisa had quickly followed suit.

Now everything was ready, and the second day after that evening at Bloemenhof, when the diamonds had been so discussed, had been fixed for the opening of the little building.

Those of the neighbours, and they were no small number, who particularly noticed Doctor Saltichus's looks and life, had seen of late a strange evidence of elasticity about him—a burst, as it were, of hope and strength, which was a novel manifestation. Till now, self-control and unruffled equanimity had been so much exercised, that no inner feeling had ever been deciphered; now these gleams of sudden confidence flashed out with fitful surprises, and men read them unmistakably between the lines of his daily conduct. They wondered. Was it the success of the hospital scheme? was he such a good Christian that only the prospect of mending broken bones or of curing disease more rapidly could thus stir the inner depths of his pure soul?

Naturally on his way home through the warm July night from Bloemenhof, one would have fancied the doctor's thoughts would be fixed on the fulfilment of his scheme, now that he had so nearly reached

the goal, and on his future duties, his future fame. More patients might accrue to him by this, his name might spread; other classes, more distant invalids, hearing of him, might come to him now, besides these poor English workmen on whom he had been spending so much pains and forethought?

Was it of this he dreamed as he leaned over the gate that led into the field dividing his house from the Randolphs? The clear moon shone down on his face, illumining every feature. No smile of success there! no look of triumph or of victory won! A look instead born of utter perplexity and utter embarrassment, as of a man checkmated, or as one who had been pushing on to an aim, with a blank wall suddenly risen before him.

Lights in the Randolphs' house. He watched them in a stony stupid sort of way.

Music from the Randolphs' house. A woman's voice borne clear on the night air.

He listened without hearing.

Almost unconsciously, he undid the little hand-gate that opened on the path leading across, and went towards the sound.

A soft English song.

"Strangers yet!"

How well he knew it!

"Strangers yet!" Ah! was he not a stranger? He swore to himself, as he struck his heel into the ground in the outer silence of his solitude.

Then listlessly he flung himself on a bench that stood under one of the trees near the house. It was a favourite place of Clara's.

Suddenly the music stopped, and Clara herself, in a white dress, came to the window.

He did not move. Her figure was strongly defined standing out against the lighted room behind her. She was listening to the soft breathings of the night wind.

Then she stepped out of the window on to the terrace, drawing a shawl around her. Still Saltichus did not move. The shadows of the moonlight were so black he thought, she would never see him if he stayed where he was: he was tired, he could not be bothered with making conversation. He had never been brought much in contact with Mrs. Randolph. Certainly they were "strangers yet!" As far as he was concerned, might they always be so!

He had no thought or plan of behaviour in his mind, when to his surprise he found she was coming towards him.

Every now and then she had stopped, thinking — or looking at the stars — or observing the moon; now, before he was

aware, here she was, and he could not escape.

With a soft even step she came up; then, discovering him, in a fit of terror at a stranger's presence was on the point of screaming when he rose:

"Hush! don't scream, Mrs. Randolph. I plead guilty. It was your singing that like Orpheus' lyre drew me here unconsciously."

"Doctor Saltichus! .... Is it you really? how curious!"

She put out her hand.

"Is it not a lovely night?"

Then she sat down for a moment.

"I did not know you cared for music?"

"It is second life to me!" said he constrainedly. "When I am tired, if I could hear that, even if it were only to be told we are strangers yet, then I should be rested, and the jar of nerve occasioned by excessive

strain, and by harrowing sights and sounds, would cease."

"You must come oftener," said Clara softly. "I like music too, and it is a comfort to have it appreciated."

"Doesn't Randolph,"—began Saltichus.

"No! he doesn't care—" said she shortly. "Listen! "she added, putting up her hand, "how soft and wailing the night wind sounds; it scarcely moves the trees and yet . . . ."

Her face was turned to the moon.

Saltichus smiled to himself as he watched her.

"It always sounds to me like the wailing voice of the great world," said he, "now moaning, now despairing, now tempestuous in anger, now important with some great and solemn truth or feeling, which it cannot keep pent up any longer."

Clara was silent.

She was beginning to doubt whether it

were quite correct to be sitting thus alone with Doctor Saltichus.

"Well! I must go!" said she rising regretfully. "Won't you come in?"

"Excuse me! I am tired!"

She smiled and excused him at once.

"What were you thinking of when I found you?" asked she timidly, lingering yet one other moment ere she went away.

She looked so handsome standing there in the moon-light, that he was going to say all sorts of things, but he checked himself as a thought struck him.

"If I tell you, will you betray me?"

"Of course not!"

"Promise! not even to Randolph?"

"No!" said she, in a low voice, for vanity whispered a thousand sweet prophecies into her ear.

"I was thinking, Mrs. Randolph, how I could get for my own, my very own, that

field where Roeland's cows are now feeding out there! You heard their lowing just now. It is reclaimed ground. I want it!"

"Oh! really?"

Veiled anger and disappointment came through the tone.

"Can you help me?" He said it so eagerly, so unlike a Dutchman who really has no end in view but cows and pasturage that Clara was interested again.

"I don't think I can. But papa might. He has to do with reclaimed lands. But I thought Baron Roeland had bought that?"

"It is in his hands, and it is to be his, I believe; I want to step in first!"

"Roeland will not like that?" questioned she.

"No! He will hate it! It is in the centre of his future property. Help me!" Nothing she would like better.

"But you will take it on a lease, I suppose!"

"No! I must buy it."

She stood silent.

Prospects of revenge flitted before her. She felt excited, happy, with a future, an occupation, at last.

"I must have a little time!" said she slowly.

"Talk your father over. Help me somehow!"

"I will!"

Just then Randolph's voice sang out:

"Clara! Clara! Where are you?"

"I must go!" said she.

"You will say nothing?" asked he.

"No! Trust me. Come again soon. I am alone in the morning."

Why so much mystery about a field?

Clara revolved the problem in her mind all the next day which she spent in Amsterdam with her husband, but she said nothing.

"How full of eccentricities the man is, to be sure!" was her last thought on the subject, as she put it away with a smile, resolving ultimately to get some amusement out of the adventure and its hero.

Not again face to face did they meet, till they and many others were standing in a circle, the next afternoon, round the door of the little hospital, and the children were singing a hymn. Clara, who was leading them, chanced to look up from the hymn-book which she was sharing with Mrs. Vincent, and saw Saltichus' gaze fixed on her face. He was singing, too. Some of the pious unction with which Mr. Vincent, in his powerful bass voice, was trolling out the devout hopes of the band of the faithful, seemed to be imparted to the Doctor. Clara crimsoned as she met his eye, and he found time to rejoice inwardly at the secret understanding existing between them.

Afterwards the clergyman, who had come

specially for the purpose from the Hague, addressed them, dwelling much on how the work and its success would greatly tend to the glory of God, and that this result should be the aim uppermost in their minds.

These pious exercises over, Roeland, as donor of the house, was called upon to say something. His sharp brilliant words fell on them like sudden sunshine on a November day, lightening and inspiring spirit and life into everything. Saltichus, who was still studying Clara, was astonished to see the changes that came over her face while he spoke. Sarcasm, ridicule, contempt, surprise, followed each other in quick succession. And when at the end of it, applause, praise and smiles fell on him thickly, Clara alone was mute and unmoved, and when Roeland passed close to her, willing to stop if she had expressed the wish, her face was averted, and her eyes fast riveted elsewhere. Roeland gone by, the truant wanderers returning swiftly,

flashed a glance of ill-concealed scorn on the orator, which was a revelation to Saltichus.

"So! She hates him, just as a woman can! So much the better for me!"

The next moment, for tongues were loosened now, and conversation and congratulations had become general, Lisa van Franckenburg crossed the fast-breaking circle to Clara, adroitly avoiding Mr. Bennett and Mr. Bradlaw —who, having largely subscribed, considered themselves deserving of a large share of notice to-day—and taking her hand, invited her with Randolph to come to Bloemenhof the following week.

"Would they come? She and Roeland expected some friends. Just now people were so glad to come into the country! They would have some music, perhaps some dancing. Lisa hoped so much they would both come and stay a day or two!"

Clara flushed with pleasure.

She would ask George; doubtless he would like it much!

And turning to look for him, Clara found herself face to face with Roeland.

"Do *you* wish us to come?" asked she suddenly, in a lower tone.

"Of course I do, dear Mrs. Randolph," said he, with admirable self-possession. "Pray oblige Lisa and myself. We see so little of each other now a days!"

The words but half satisfied her; however, Clara did not want much pressing.

She sought George and asked him. A wry face was his answer, for after his work he felt too tired for pleasure, till her evident disappointment:

"I have so little amusement now-a-days, George!" decided him.

The invitation was accepted, and Saltichus, who had heard all, thought there was something behind the scenes, beyond the teaching of his philosophy, and that it behoved him to

be careful ere he trusted Clara too implicitly.

For some days therefore they did not meet, and Clara grew restless and anxious, wondering what he expected of her.

CHAPTER II.

"*Par.* I would have been—something, I know not
what;
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.
There are worse portions than this one of mine.
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
If vanity should become the chosen food
Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish
To find its early aspirations true,
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-
breath—
An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies;
Should make it proud to emulate, surpass
Base natures in the practices which woke
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No! no!
Fest. Trust me, this mood will pass away!
I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.

These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold."

PARACELSUS.

IT was the afternoon of a changeable summer's day. There had been rain in the morning, but now the wind had gone down, and clouds shaded from purples and greys to masses of snowy whiteness flecked the sky ; the sun shone out with dazzling splendour, and all nature seemed smiling and at rest.

Randolph, walking through the grounds of Bloemenhof, where he was to meet Clara after his work at the office, stopped awhile looking at the glorious sunlight and at the soft shadows of the trees on the ground.

He raised his hat and passed his hand over his brow, as a weary man does, and sighed with a sort of relief, as he felt that his work was left for once far behind him, and that he might yield unresistingly to the influences of the sweet summer air.

A thousand insects hovered around him; their soft undertone made music in the trees, and the sweet whisperings among the leaves above him were so many love-messages this happy place brought to his ear.

After labour, rest and peace! sighed he. Peace, thought he to himself, such as he had not tasted of late. Rest, brought him by Lisa's sweet influence.

There, as he stood, he thought it all over. This, her revenge! This, the return she made him for his faithlessness and desertion!

Randolph (so like a man!) thought he owed this invitation simply to his own attractions. He never dreamed that pity for Clara or any ulterior motive of kindness towards his wife had anything to do with it. The beauty of the place, the blazing splendour of the gardens all had their influence on him. Lisa surrounded him with this, Lisa ministered to weary heart and brain, and she bade him be at rest.

In truth, he had been very weary of late. No refuge had he found for heart or spirit. Not yet, not even to himself, would he acknowledge why, or would he say that anyone had failed him, or that any hope had played him false.

Never to itself did the loyal heart breathe one word against the wife of his choice. If, smiling, he rebuked her and found fault—for of late differences had increased, and sympathy had been too visibly wanting, yet to himself he only said she had plenty of time to improve, she had had no experience as yet; and till the learning came to her, her very faults were pretty!

But, meanwhile, the waiting alone was weary work, and the absence of all true sympathy was harassing to him, who set so much store on an inner life of perfect understanding and mutual intelligence.

So the void once made had gone on ever increasing, and ninety times a day he had cried out:

"Oh, God! I am weary. Let me lay down my life and be at rest."

The shattering of the idol had proved too bitter for this strong man, who yet existed so much by all the tenderest, best, and highest springs of human nature.

But God neither gave him rest nor took away that, to him, so weary and worn-out a life, and then George Randolph, finding the burden must be borne, turned himself round, smiled at the cold, mocking stars, which in the old days he had been wont to trust, tossed back his head as he vowed he would never be defeated, and set himself to bear and to do bravely whatever might come to him to be borne or done at all.

Thus, from one of those with whom heart, poetry, beauty, art is life, he entered the roll of those unfortunates whose work is their life. A dreary look-out this; at least, when we are young. Afterwards, we all see the beauty and chastened glory of duty and of

being found ever foremost in the breach, in doing with our might whatsoever God may give us to do, and in being thankful for it.

Stupidly, senselessly, like a beast of burden that does not comprehend it should husband its strength, he set his shoulder to the wheel. Up early, home late, often working into the small hours of the morning, taking long journeys and allowing himself no intervals of rest, hurrying here, planning there—anything to move the work on to completion and to leave Holland, which he had begun to hate, in that he seemed to have wrecked his life on its slippery strand.

And he gained glory. Such words as "Great man," "Genius," "Power," were showered broadcast over his path: his opinion was asked everywhere, his name cited, his words quoted; wealth and laurel wreaths seemed likely to crown his earthly life for evermore. He was accustomed to answer

with a miserable half-hearted sort of smile when praises and honour came to him thus. But in his soul he did not care. He liked his work and he could do it well. But praise brought him no peace. He looked far beyond, as most of us do; the goal won, and the crown held out to us, we are straining our eyes on to the next snow-crowned pinnacle, and are ready to spurn the glory gained. He wanted to be gone. When the end should come, and he should be his own master, free to wander away anywhere, free to amuse Clara, and make her life more tempting to her, then contentment might come to him.

Now life was one long want, and one long weariness. God be thanked! Such efforts must end some time. The triumph must come soon now; the Herculean works he had achieved must bring their reward. Every day now saw the harbour nearer completion.

He roused himself from his reverie to go

into the house, when voices close by arrested him.

"So, Roeland, you will say yes."

"I do not know if you understand, Lisa; and I cannot explain my reasons if you do not, for fear of making you sad."

"You do not fear your power failing?"

"No."

"And you do not doubt your duty?"

"No."

"Then this man, failing by sudden, but lasting illness, Franewyk requires a representative, and Parliament's doors are open."

"I know, I know, Lisa——"

"Well?"

"Lisa, do you think if a very clever man, more than this, an honest man, were suddenly told to get up into one of our pulpits and to preach, because there was no one else to do it, and that this man had not yet made up his mind what he had to say—nay, more, if he

were not certain yet what he himself believed—would it be right of him to accept?"

"Would it not come to him, what he had to say? And would not faith come to him in the saying?"

"Suppose in his haste he taught them wrong . . . . would you forgive me, Lisa? Authors, artists, statesmen, priests, do you forget their responsibilities? There is a clever man in the English Parliament, Lisa, he is great and powerful, but he is an atheist. Can you doubt the seeds he sows will not produce hereafter—it may not be for years—fruit rotten at the core, fruit that will work ruin, and destroy the health of the country according to the seriousness with which it is dealt?"

"But you, Roeland. No, it is not so!—You believe—those old days, those old thoughts are changed! Your doubts and scepticism. . . . Roeland, answer me now. You

stand beside me, and we are on equal ground, are we not ?"

"Sweet Lisa," stammered he, "those old days have never changed. If I could believe, your faith and purity would have done it long ago. But I would not disturb you, child, with sad perplexities—I would not——"

"Hush ! what is my faith for, if not to strengthen yours ? I am not clever; I can hardly help you, because I could not perhaps answer the objections that seem so formidable to you, to me so trifling. I pity you, Roeland; indeed, I pity you; out there on a rock of sand that seems to dwindle away beneath your feet, and the waves are beating against it, and a great wilderness of waters—a waste of despair, is beyond, because you have no faith to buoy you up and save you. You will not believe, and you sink down, and the sand sucks you in !"

"And your faith is, to me, much the same;

false and groundless, irrational and senseless."

"I never take a walk but I feel God there; in the flowers, in the clouds, in the sunshine. Everything created by some Great Being, all-wise and all-seeing, whose power—subject to laws of His own making, that can be changed at His will—is wholly absolute and wholly good."

"It is your Christian faith, your many doctrines: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, that are bewildering. You set down too much. Christ never professed to be God."

"Then his sacrifice was imperfect! You believe in immortality, Roeland?"

"I cannot help believing in that. One sees that everything here is but a beginning, a part of some perfect whole; art, human nature, genius, all tend to some hereafter, when we may reasonably hope that we shall enjoy a continuation of this life's best and purest

blessings, for one speculates that anything perfectly good must be meant to endure. Oh yes! I believe in immortality because there is something within me that tells me I was not born just to do nothing and die—I feel something on the contrary that tells me I shall never die!"

"How desolate, you are, Roeland!—may!—speculate!—reasonably hope! how cold and desolate! It makes me shudder, and I feel as though an everlasting winter must shroud your life. Just pray, and see the answer come to you, and then we shall have no more of this snow."

"Impossible, Lisa! one cannot pray without faith!"

"Roeland, you have often said you love me. If so, you must trust me, and indeed I could not deceive you. If then I say with my whole soul it is so, that I believe God is here and does answer my prayer, can't you believe too?"

"I believe in you!"

"And that is all!"

It was a bitter disappointment to her.

A turn in the path brought them in view of Randolph, and after shaking hands they walked together to the house.

Randolph looked ill and harassed. Roeland said so.

"You have been working too hard," said Lisa softly.

He smiled, disclaiming the imputation.

Then asking for news, they told him that the member who represented Franewyk in the Dutch parliament, had suddenly been struck with paralysis, and Lisa said she had been urging Roeland to accept the proffered seat. Warmly Randolph sided with her, and Roeland, more than half convinced, began to yield.

That night they were merry enough at Bloemenhof. Lisa's happy disposition softened every worry of life, and put away for the time,

with gentle but firm hand, every care besetting those whom she drew around her. Anxieties and perplexities were hurried out of sight. Travers, who had noted the changes in Saltichus as clearly as any one,—his former coldness, his seeming energy of despair, and now his later confidence,—and had wondered much thereat, forgot them for once. Saltichus himself was brilliant and winning, while Clara, feeling the softening influences of luxury and friendship, was another being, and smiled on all, even on her husband, as brightly as in the old days, ere thoughts of revenge or ambition had troubled her mind.

CHAPTER III.

"*Hel.* O, happy fair!
Your eyes are load-stars, and your tongue's sweet air
More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching; O, were favour so!
Your's would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody."

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

TWENTY-FOUR hours of Eden unalloyed, and then Clara, like another Eve, looked up and sighed for the forbidden fruit.

There, close to her lips it hung—Lisa's

happiness, Lisa's beauty, Lisa's diamonds, Lisa's wealth. Opposite Clara, that handsome young Baron who once had been so near kneeling at her feet.

Saltichus' eager eyes met her's across the dinner-table,—a shaft of sympathy, hungering even as she herself was longing for the unattainable. A very serpent, close at hand!

The tempter smiled, the temptation seemed irresistible.

There, at the end of the table, sat Roeland, the owner of this brilliant luxury, the master-mind who had brought together all this assemblage of artistic objects, the creator almost of this tasteful display!

"Oh! my love! my love, Roeland!" sighed she to herself, and the blind rage took possession of her that had been smouldering in her heart for so long. She hardly knew what she did, but as she lifted her glass to her lips to dissemble her feelings, she vowed he should feel her power yet again, and then her eyes

met those of Saltichus once more. Quickly averted, however, they were, to fall on Lisa, and Clara followed his glance.

That night Lisa surpassed herself. Dressed with unusual care, either to do honour to her guests, or to distance any possible rival, the Court of Flowers might well bow to its Queen to-night.

The jewels on her neck and arms, the glittering diamonds in her hair, reflected back a thousand rays from the lights around. And smiles and merry words were hers; they fell around with soft and beaming influence. Her mother, better now than she had been for some time, listened for her voice, and distinguishing its joyous strain, bent towards her again and again; a happy smile lighted on the old Baroness's face, as she leaned back contentedly and whispered to Roeland:

"What makes little Lisa so gay to-night?"

He looked on and listened, admiring.

Randolph, abject worshipper, though at a

distance, returned to his ancient servitude, and Clara sat silent, suffering.

Just a glimpse Lisa caught of her pain, and set it down to jealousy, a passing thought—no more!

Even Lisa smiled for a moment, as any woman would, at her triumph coming to her thus, after so long! Then, giving the signal, she rose, and Clara found Saltichus asking permission to sit by her in the next room.

Was she pleased? She hardly knew. His attention flattered her, and she had felt drawn towards him by that hungry straining look in his eyes, so like her own feelings; but still she was afraid of him; as yet she did not understand him. She could hardly hope that she alone of all the country round was the favoured one who would be allowed to see into the inner depths of his soul.

"Very—very beautiful, is she not?" said he slowly, letting his eyes fall on Lisa, who was passing down the room at that moment.

"Very!"

"And what a happy life! I can fancy nothing more charming for a woman, than to have riches and beauty, and to be able to make every one happy around her. Contentment is so infectious!"

"Is it? I hardly know if I agree with you there."

Last night she would have agreed with him, but now the happiness and wealth of others palled upon her; she had looked too long, she wished to taste; failing possession herself, she would like to dash away the cup from the lips of those other too-fortunate mortals.

"Why! are you covetous?"

"Hardly that!" said she, colouring. "But naturally one contrasts this with home; you must do so yourself, Doctor Saltichus. Lonely days, solitude, discomfort, want of sympathy, no sounds of merry laughter, no beautiful things to rouse one's soul to admiration, and then to lull it to sleep in the ineffable bliss of

attainment—no answering thought, or calming power—no . . . stay! what am I saying."

"Nothing!" said he smiling. "Only I see you are like myself, full of artistic thoughts and wants, with no sympathy in this particular and no vent for it! You love beautiful things?"

"Yes, intensely!"

"Diamonds?"

"I have none," smiled Clara. "If they would gain me sympathy, yes! I should like them too!"

"They would suit you better than Madame Roeland! your hair is so dark!"

"After all . . . ."

"After all you do not need them! was that your thought?"

"Hardly! I was going to say that after all one is better without them. They are temptations and responsibilities!"

"And—sour grapes! I say that to myself when I want pretty things—a statue or a

picture! What a responsibility! But—a woman without diamonds is to me like a king without a crown, or a plant without a flower. By-the-by, Mrs. Randolph, what news of my field?"

"You must speak to my father. I have paved the way."

"What did he say?"

"He was at first very angry, and then very much surprised!"

"Get me my field, and then I'll give you some diamonds!"

Then he rose and followed the other men into the smoking-room.

The next day was the annual fair at Franewyk, and the country for miles round was in a state of wildest excitement. Roeland was one of the chief promoters of sport in Holland, and he so loved to keep up old customs and ancient games now passed out of date that the fair of Franewyk was popular with the people. Games and sports of all kinds,

races, feats of skill, athletic and gymnastic accomplishments, were contained in the programme, and many good and substantial prizes awaited the victors.

The party from Bloemenhof drove down.

Roeland and most of the gentlemen, Madame van Rosenhagen and the rest of the ladies, had gone earlier; Lisa drove Clara in her pony-carriage: attached to the ponies' heads were the sweet-toned bells that Clara never heard at a distance among the lanes around Franewyk without a pang of jealousy.

The variety of the costumes made the scene gay with contrasting colour; the ornaments of the women spoke of the general holiday, while some of the men had put on bright-coloured waistcoats and bits of riband in their hats, while decorative buttons and more or less picturesque coats gave a thoroughly foreign element to the meeting. The English looked as plain and homely as

the English lower classes always do; why Providence has denied them the taste for dress and the eye for colour possessed by every other nation under the sun is a mystery! Have not even the savages more?

Yes! Franewyk was honoured that day. Not a village near but sent some representatives, not a province but sent some stragglers. From Friesland, from Brabant, from Gelderland they came. Even from Marken—that strange old-world place of unsociability that barely raises its flat uninteresting head above its protector, the Zuyder Zee! No mountains have they there, except their windmills, no roads either, except those made by the frequent passing to and fro of their great wooden shoes on the moist ground. Put back the dial of time just four hundred years, and you might perhaps stand on an equality with them in idea and knowledge. Intermarrying only with the inhabitants of their own little

island, never moving or caring for the companionship of other men, regarding all others with distrust, and ill-dissembled jealousy—their appearance at Franewyk caused endless speculation. Lisa, who had often been to Marken in Roeland's yacht, and had in vain endeavoured to carry off some of the household gods of those bright interiors—such as the china, the brass ornaments, the lace, rings and jewels or coral beads of the women—had made one or two friends among the Islanders, and took their coming as a compliment to herself.

"Or it is the women's love for an outing, Clara! Just like ourselves—for they are human!"

"Are they?" questioned Clara.

She had never seen them before, and they fulfilled her wildest dreams of savage South Sea Islanders: to her they seemed indeed scarcely human.

But there they were, smiling and nodding

to Lisa in there strangely brocaded dresses, black and red, with gold thread worked in and out: their hair cut square over their foreheads, flowing out far behind, should it chance to escape from the close lace cap. The men were the quaintest figures of all, with their caps stuck on the backs of their heads, their long hair, loose jackets, bright waistcoats, and enormous knickerbockers with woollen stockings. Was it from Marken that the fashion of knickerbockers came?

And not only from Marken had Franewyk guests that day, from Urk, from Texel—still they came.

How quaint the merry-go-rounds looked, spinning round with their freights of human beings dressed in their different costumes and talking their jargon of dialects, so incomprehensible to the English spectators.

There rode Jan Krusemann by a huge stolid Marken woman, and there was

Travers, always something of a mountebank, making furious love to a maiden from Urk, though he knew not a word she said. Next came Jane Lord, and beside her was the handsome diamond-cutter who had alarmed them all by his first appearance here a fortnight ago.

How gay the decorated stalls, set out with flowers and all sorts of refreshments looked! how eager and anxious were the maidens sitting behind their counters, on the look-out for unwary customers!

There, at a distance, Adrian van Brunesteyn had challenged Jack Meadows to a hopping match, and was securing Mr. Vincent as umpire.

Here, rounding the corner and followed by other harddravers, comes Roeland, driving a handsome strong black horse; one sees the white reins, round and strong—the red rosettes, the black and red harness, the red wheels to his light chariot, and then they all

scamper off. Wild cries fill the air; it is like so many fire-engines scurrying along. The boers have each a maiden sitting by their side; Lisa, on a sign from Roeland, jumps in beside him. What joy-cries rent the air.

"Share joy, share pain!" think the people. The nobles who can stoop to be human and to be joyous when the crowd is gay, win love speedily.

But Roeland must enter Parliament. Popularity so easily bought is not to be despised!

Lisa smiles and waves her hand as she passes by.

Roeland wins of course.

Later, when Lisa came back to Clara, she found Mr. Bradlaw talking to her.

"But who is he?" asked Mrs. Randolph.

"I do not know. He is engaged in the diamond-cutting establishment at Amsterdam, and says it ruins his health. He wants a place here!"

"He seems sharp enough."

"Yes. I hope Randolph will employ him."

Just then Mrs. Lord passed the pony-carriage.

"Tell me who your friend is, Mrs. Lord?"

"I don't know, sir. Not his name at least. But he comes from Borneo, and my John having been there once, I know, I was glad to hear about it, and so we made friends."

"Did he know your man John?"

"I didn't say anything about him, sir, for I didn't quite like the looks of him. He has been down here once or twice, and says he wants a place. If Mr. Randolph gives it him, then we shall see. Time enough then, sir, to tell him of my family affairs."

"You are a prudent woman, Mrs. Lord."

"Well, sir, begging your pardon, riding on a merry-go-round once on a fair day is a very different thing from telling all about myself

to a stranger. He does very well for the merry-go-round."

They all laughed.

"Besides, sir, where's Borneo?"

"Borneo," said Mr. Bradlaw, feeling nervous that his geographical knowledge should be tested before all the nobility of Franewyk, "why, Mrs. Lord, don't you know? it's in the China Seas."

"In the China Seas, sir! Why, that's where my John, sir, was shipwrecked, sir. There was a ty—, I forget, sir, a ty— something in a harbour, and just as they thought they had got safe to land, if you'll believe me, sir, the ship split, and they were sent the Lord knows where; perhaps to Borneo, the Lord knows."

"And how did you know all that, Jane?" asked Lisa.

"John sent me a letter, my lady; not that I should ever have known it from that, but he touched at Plymouth afterwards on his

way to America, and I went down to see him, and then he told me. That storm—the ty— something—must have been awful, I should think, by the way he told it, and then I remember he said something about Borneo. He wouldn't have if he hadn't been there. John never talks of places he knows nothing of."

Suddenly there was a roar of applause from the people, and they looked up to see the diamond-cutter, having climbed a greasy pole, balancing himself—now on his foot, now on his body—on the top.

Was he the devil himself? Such a feat had never been seen by those good Dutchmen at Franewyk before.

There on the top of his pole, he seemed quite at home. Now raising himself, now face downwards (would the pole pierce his body or not?), now on his back like a stuck turtle, now again balanced on one foot, waving his hat to the crowd below.

"Mr. Bradlaw, let me give him his prize!" said Clara, actuated by some sudden impulse. She remembered the man's gallantry the only day she had seen him.

Mr. Bradlaw, anxious to curry favour with the Baroness van Franckenburg, whom he had so few opportunities of seeing, despatched Mr. Bennett to fulfil Clara's behest, and renewed the conversation.

"You have often been to the diamond cutting, I suppose, Madame van Franckenburg?"

"Never," said Lisa. "My husband has often promised to take me, but I have never been yet."

"Oh, Lisa! do let us go. It would be so interesting," exclaimed Clara.

"How shall we get in?"

"We must have an order," said Clara.

"Randolph's wife can go anywhere in Holland, I trust," said Bradlaw.

Clara blushed and smiled.

"You are partial, Mr. Bradlaw."

Just now diamonds were objects of prime interest to her. All night she had lain awake, alternately hating Lisa for her beauty, and then wondering what Saltichus had meant. Oh! what would she not give for diamonds? Then she should eclipse Lisa, then Roeland would love her, then she could have her revenge, then she could laugh, and then she could sing; then she would hate no longer, for she should be all-powerful, and everyone would be alike beneath her hate and her notice. What had he meant? He would give her diamonds! not one, not a single diamond, but diamonds! How much were diamonds worth? she knew nothing—she had never had any. Her mother, Mrs. Vincent, had a locket composed of several, but she had not done with it yet, and Clara could not expect to have it for many a long day.

Then, too, she remembered when she

was a child she had played roughly with it, and some of the smaller stones had fallen out of the setting. Clara had been too frightened to confess, and then the stones had got lost, and they had been replaced by imitation diamonds. Mrs. Vincent said they did as well, but Clara had not cared very much about the locket since.

Just then another performance began.

The gentlemen had entered for a race.

A race, each man being on foot, driving before him a donkey, with bit and long driving reins. The length of rein was necessary, for donkeys have a strange aptitude for kicking up behind.

Roeland, Travers, Randolph, Adrian, Mr. Vincent, and Saltichus. Six gallant competitors for glory.

Each had his donkey well in hand, and laughter convulsed the people as neither start, stand still, or stand even, would any two of these six donkeys do. The prize to win

was a donkey given; to mount the donkey running was forbidden.

Travers' donkey was perhaps the most tractable and most promising of the lot; he stood next to Saltichus, whose animal being the oldest, was also the most unmanageable and the most crafty of all. Travers took the opportunity to pin two large white paper wings, caught up from a stall near, to Saltichus' coat, as he was torn now here now there by his plunging donkey, while Roeland, enjoying a joke, presented him with a feather, which, in all good faith and unconscious of his large white appendage, the doctor stuck into his hat.

Jan Krusemann blew a horn at last, and off they started.

Was there ever such a race? Now charging the crowd, now standing firm as rocks, now threatening to run into carriage or waggon that might be near, now endeavouring to browse on gingerbread in a stall, always

kicking violently, always doing wrong—these donkeys and their drivers lost temper and time very grievously.

Mr. Vincent gave up very soon, and was found sitting on the ground incapacitated by laughter, while his donkey had gone careering away, heels up and head down, into the next province. Travers, who had begun by belabouring his leader inhumanly, soon vanished; he swore afterwards the donkey had bolted, and that a sense of honour alone had compelled him to hold on. Roeland never got away from the starting post, while Adrian and Randolph got their reins hopelessly entangled and their donkeys had a kicking match, till the harness broke, and then they took to browsing peacefully.

Saltichus was the hero of the hour; kicking, plunging, tearing, charging, squealing, went that ill-tempered donkey, now standing stock still, then throwing up his heels when he felt the whip too sharply. A distant bray

from a victimized comrade recalled him to energy, and all at once away he tore, Saltichus plunging after him with white flapping wings and red feather, holding on like grim death all through the mud and slush. So, till they came to the stream, when, seeing the beast meant to take to the water, the doctor, with true American tenacity, and meaning, like the Israelites, to pass over dry shod, jumped on the traitor's back.

The weight telling, stock still stood the beast, and . . . in over his head went the long-legged doctor!

In—head foremost, into water and mud, where head and shoulders disappeared, and the donkey looked on from the bank, laughing.

Up from the mud, for more than a moment, stuck the doctor's legs; where would he have been a moment more, had not Guy come up? Guy, who swore something to himself amid his laughter as he came—some-

thing about leaving him there—then dashed in after his enemy, and reared him foot-foremost out of the mire.

Mud in his mouth and all over his face.

Hair and hat and clothes bedabbled.

"Who pulled me out?" asked he.

"I did. Travers."

He opened his eyes and looked at him.

"Thank you. Hope you'll never regret it," and smiled sarcastically.

He was beside himself with rage and wounded vanity.

Wings and feather much bedabbled.

"What are these? Who put them there?"

"I did. But old fellow! I have saved you from suffocation in the mud. An inglorious death! You and I are meant for better things. Come, shake hands?"

Guy's temper was imperturbable.

But Saltichus could not contain himself for rage. They had given him that donkey on purpose; Guy had insulted him by pinning that absurdity on his coat-tail! he would never forgive it, and he would never speak to him again.

Carrying his burden of mud and mire, he marched away, passed the laughing crowd, and would have passed Roeland, who advanced towards him, leading a small grey donkey, with ribbons round its neck and a gay frontlet.

"You are victor! You have done and suffered most, and, I think, have been the farthest."

"I have had enough of donkeys, thanks, Van Franckenburg. Let him have it whom it suits the best."

He looked back towards Guy as he spoke.

"Then it may come to me, I fancy," said

Roeland, "for I was in at the winning post before you all, never having left it."

On he went, threading the laughing throng assembled to witness the gift of the prize pig to the old woman over seventy, who by her swift running had beaten her contemporaries, and had won it.

The pig was decked out with rosettes on its fore-feet, and a gay ribbon round its neck; caps on its ears, and a blue bow on its nose; stepping delicately and unwillingly enough, as pigs do, peering craftily out of its sly little eyes, blinking its white eyelashes with wicked humour, it came—squealed aloud as it whisked its little tail, and turned sharply round, threatening to overturn its future mistress as she came forward to take the cord to lead it away.

No smile had Saltichus to bestow on such a scene. He walked on, and passing Lisa's pony-carriage, was astonished to see Clara giving the prize to the diamond cutter.

He saw her interested face, and the man eagerly pouring his thanks into her ear.

And she was listening, as pleased, as eager.

CHAPTER IV.

"Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground; long heath, brown furze, anything."

TEMPEST.

CLARA and her husband stood together on the platform of the little station at Franewyk. She was waiting for Lisa.

It was more than a fortnight after the fair, and the party at Bloemenhof had broken up some time ago.

To-day Lisa and Clara were bound on a shopping expedition to Amsterdam, and to see the diamond cutting. Lisa had not been so very anxious; but with Clara to wish a

thing was but the prelude to doing it, and she had given her neighbour no peace till the arrangement had been made, and the date fixed.

The time was up, the train was in, Clara was just giving her up, when the pony-carriage came in sight round the corner, the ponies galloping at the top of their speed, "the sweet bells jangling out of tune."

Randolph ran to get a ticket, and the officials waited for the Baroness, while Clara went to meet her, exclaiming that she had thought she was not coming after all.

"I was very nearly not coming. I was anxious about my mother, but she was better this morning, and would not let me stay at the end. Are we in time?"

Randolph found them places, and with many injunctions not to miss the afternoon train down, the ladies steamed away to Amsterdam, while Randolph drove on to his office.

There, to his surprise, he found Mr. Vincent. He was very seldom as early as this, and very seldom to be found at the little house on the shore at all.

Of late, their ways had diverged a good deal. Vincent's work did not bring him to the office at Ryssenwyk: it could be done better at home, except that which required the sanction of the heads of the company, and for that he went to Amsterdam. Arguments he and Randolph held, and schemes they discussed, but that was hardly office work.

"To what am I indebted for this?" asked he, laughing, nodding a greeting to Guy at the same time.

"Well! the fact is, I want to speak a word to you in private."

His good-humoured face was clouded, and there was perplexity written on it.

Randolph preceded him into his own room, and shut the door before he spoke again:

"This reclaimed land, I suppose? I always thought it would be tiresome."

"Ah! she has told you then?"

"She! Who?"

"Why, Clara."

"Clara! No; not a word. What has she to do with it?"

"Whew!" ejaculated poor Mr. Vincent.

This added to his difficulties considerably.

The fact was, he had met Saltichus in his daughter's drawing-room, and there she had put some pressure on him about the much-desired field.

Then Saltichus himself offered a higher price for it than could be reasonably expected from Roeland or any one else; and, when that had failed to elicit a direct promise of the transfer from Mr. Vincent, who dreaded offending Roeland and the attendant unpopularity, Saltichus had ventured to whisper into Mr. Vincent's pliant ear, that if this little

matter could be managed for him, the man who managed it would not regret it personally.

Mr. Vincent had twirled and twisted this last piece of intelligence round and round in his well-oiled brain, used to digest all sorts of proposals; and, there being no invincible obstacle in the shape of principle or morality —for had he not come to Holland to make money, and it once made, might not the devil himself have the country for all he cared?— having twisted it round and round, he had, though willing to treat, almost decided that Saltichus could have nothing to offer that would make it worth while risking his precious reputation. However, before distinctly and indignantly refusing, he turned to Clara, and whispered:

"Not worth while, is it?"

Now Clara had nodded in the affirmative with extraordinary decision; so Mr. Vincent, with no visible emotion, save a slight rise of

colour on his well-rounded cheek, had said at once, altering his tactics:

"Oh, well! my dear fellow, don't be in a hurry. We must see what can be done. But don't be in a hurry."

"But unfortunately, Mr. Vincent, I am in a great hurry.

Now that was unpleasant.

"I am aware," went on Saltichus, "that these things are seldom done without a little interest, and I, having no influence here, shall be glad to show my sense of obligation to you by paying down to you a sum beyond the nominal price, which I shall be careful not to mention publicly."

Clara looked away out of the window, and Mr. Vincent soon after, seeing that there seemed no chance of the doctor's taking leave, resolved to ask Clara on the next opportunity her private ideas on the subject, and to bid farewell now with as much dignity as might be possible.

Since then, he had never seen her alone, but the magnitude of the doctor's promise had grown under contemplation, like plants under a bell-glass, and now his one aim was how to transfer the land from the one purchaser to the other.

It was in this dilemma that he came for the assistance of Randolph's clear brain, well-determined, be it understood, not to mention that more personal part of the transaction to his honourable son-in-law.

"In those things George is such a fool!"

But Clara having said absolutely nothing about it to her husband was annoying. Yet . . . after all, perhaps he had been making a mountain out of a mole-hill; perhaps it was not a case of such magnitude as he had at first considered.

"Ah! I dare say Clara forgot. It was only that she asked me first to manage it! I mean . . . . . ."

"To manage it?" repeated George.

"Well! here are the facts!" said Vincent briskly, putting on his business-manner, as he frequently did when he was in a corner, "to cut a long story short. And there are the papers with regard to some of the reclaimed lands;" he pushed a bundle of documents towards Randolph, who glanced at them as he listened—"though I think, with regard to that particular land, you must have the plans and . . ."

"I dare say."

"You see it is the land that young Roeland desires and intends shall be his, and that fellow Saltichus wants it."

"He must want," said Randolph.

George Randolph could never run counter to Lisa's husband, as long as he had breath or strength to offer to either of them.

"But Saltichus offers double the price Roeland does!"

"Never mind."

"But, George, the Van Franckenburgs are

all very well, but won't the company call me a confounded fool, if, just for a case of personal partiality, I let this sum slip through their fingers ?"

"I see. You are doubting between your duty to the company, and your duty to your friend ?" asked Randolph, looking as if he saw through him.

"Yes," answered he, stooping to put in the end of a bootlace that offended him.

"You forget how largely indebted the company are already to Baron van Franckenburg for assistance and permission given hitherto to all their works,—for large sums of money advanced, and for other sums paid down on land that for some time could make him no return. What and where is this land that Saltichus wants ?"

"Near Bergenend. Not far from his house !"

"Not far from mine ?"

"Close."

"Why does he want it?"

"I cannot imagine: unless it be for building and speculation."

"It is the very centre of the future extensive estate of Bloemenhof. Roeland will not suffer thus to have his dreams interfered with."

"I know. Could we sell it out first, and then . . . regret . . . . that . . . . unavoidable . . . ."

"A true friend's part, indeed!" interrupted Randolph contemptuously. "The only plan I see is to tell Roeland of this rival purchaser. He may be willing to give more."

"Saltichus does not wish it known."

"Oh! Come! Let us have plain sailing—everything above board at least. Yet—I am not sure! is there not already some deed of promise?"

"If no other purchaser appeared!"

"I still think," said Randolph, leaving his stool and walking up and down with his hands in his pockets, "that our first duty is to Van Franckenburg, and that . . . ."

The door opened suddenly and Guy's head appeared:

"Is Mr. Vincent here?" and before either had time to answer, Roeland himself walked in.

He was graver than usual, more dignified, more reserved.

It was not Roeland, it was the Baron van Franckenburg.

Was it his new Parliamentary duty—for during the last fortnight the election was over, and he was the representative now of Franewyk—was it this that gave him so much dignity? His career had begun, and with brilliancy. The speech he had made as he offered himself to the people as their member, had gained applause from every part of the country; white-headed men smiled as they read it, and saw his father again before them; the younger ones wondered as they heard—they had no idea there was so much stamina or substance in Roeland. He had seemed to them a very butterfly, intent on sipping the sweets of life

wherever he had a chance; whence he got all this political and minute commercial knowledge, whence this intimate familiarity with the past diplomatic relations of his country with other nations, they could not imagine.

The one thought in the minds of all the men in the room was to congratulate him on his success and on his brilliant speech. Something in his manner deterred them however, and not one word on the subject was said.

He shook hands with both Randolph and Vincent, and then turned to the latter.

"I heard you were here, Mr. Vincent. I wished to see you particularly on a matter of importance."

"The Reclamations, I imagine. The Bergenend land . . . . ."

"Exactly!"

"How did you know of there being a purchaser?" asked Randolph, for he was surprised

that everyone seemed to know about it except himself.

"My wife told me of the scheme going on," said he, "and said that Mrs. Randolph had acquainted her with it, and had urged her to persuade me to acquiesce."

As he spoke he held his head high, and looked as if not all the women in the world, not even Lisa, would ever gain any consent from him against his common sense.

"Clara, again! how incomprehensible!" thought Randolph. At that moment he hated his identity with Vincent. He had always liked Roeland; he could not bear being misjudged by him. The young man's giving him the cold shoulder even for a moment hurt him.

"Will you come into another room?" asked Mr. Vincent of Roeland. It was his only hope to get his victim away beyond ear-shot of that eccentric son-in-law of his.

Roeland bowed his head and moved for him to lead the way.

Randolph too proud to say anything, let them go. The Reclamations were certainly Mr. Vincent's province, not his.

"What is it, George?" asked Guy anxiously.

"Only a row about some land," said he testily. "Some that the Doctor Saltichus wants, and of course Roeland will not care to have a rival owner hereabouts."

"Saltichus? what? . . . ."

"I don't know the particulars."

He busied himself in his work, and Guy went off.

Soon voices rose high in the next room, and Randolph felt more irritated every moment.

"Should he go?" thought he. "Yet—no! It was no business of his. Besides, perhaps he was well out of it. With his last breath he should wish to stand by Roeland, and must

protest against this unneighbourly action, yet he must befriend his partner: he must appear to act with him and with the company. The English in Holland were his party, and what were the Dutch to him? But, was there ever anything so mean, so penny wise, so pound foolish, so ungentlemanlike, so ungrateful! Would they not thus be making an enemy of Roeland, who had hitherto stood by them their fastest friend? By every debt of feeling and honour, were they not bound to oblige him in every possible particular?"

So, he fidgeted away to himself, when Guy came back, standing with one hand on the door, the other in his pocket.

"I say, George, do go to them!"

"What can I do?"

"Van der Pyl thinks you had better. We both have the greatest faith in your sagacity!"

"A truce to your jokes, Guy!"

But he went, which was all Guy wanted.

"I can hardly understand your extreme repugnance, Baron," Vincent was saying, "and I cannot resist thinking it a little ungenerous."

Roeland was standing facing him as he sat on his stool; his arms were folded, and he looked scornful and displeased.

Randolph sauntered in.

"But I can understand it, my dear Vincent, and I think Van Franckenburg deserves better at our hands."

"There, you hear!" exclaimed Roeland, with true foreign vivacity. "Thanks—Mr. Randolph—you understand!"

Randolph's blood mounted to his cheeks at the Mr. For years that formality had been dropped between them. Roeland must indeed have been wounded to the quick.

"The Baron will not care for buildings of hospitals, or asylums, or anything else that this foolish doctor will want to build, start-

ing up in the very centre of his property and . . . . ."

Roeland's eyes met his: the Baron had struck on his ear as strangely as the Mr. on Randolph's—

"George, neither you nor the Baron seem to recollect what a trifling slip of land it is, and what a large sum . . . . ."

"Does he offer such a large sum? oh!" laughed Roeland, "now I see what it is. You say we Dutchmen love our guilders, but—commend me to the English!"

"I am only thinking of my masters, of the Company I serve—all hard-working men."

"You must not judge England by one or two," put in Randolph.

Vincent interrupted him:

"And I say I think it hard when such an eligible offer is made to such toilers of the sea—men who have helped to make Holland what it is . . . . ."

"We shall have bloodshed in a minute," said Guy who had been standing in the doorway behind Randolph. "It is Naboth's vineyard over again."

"Most unbusiness-like this!" exclaimed Vincent in a rage, getting up, and knocking over his stool. "Really if I cannot speak a word to Baron van Franckenburg . . . . ."

Jack Meadows entered hastily without knocking.

"Is Baron Roeland here?"

So he was always called by the poorer people.

"Yes! here I am!"

"A messenger from Bloemenhof. The Baroness dangerously ill."

"Lisa?"

"Madame van Franckenburg?" exclaimed they all severally.

"No. The Baroness van Hoevenaar!"

Roeland was out of the house already.

Suddenly he put his hand to his brow—

"Lisa is away. Travers—Randolph!"

They were there close to him.

"Lisa, she ought to be there. I have feared this, I would not tell her. It is worse than they think."

"Good heavens. Clara has taken her to Amsterdam."

"Shall I go?" asked Guy.

"What's the good? you would never find them. When you were in the Dam, they would be in the Kalverstrasse."

"They are coming back by the five o'clock train."

"Ah! so then—we must leave it!"

He drove off, and they all returned to their work, somewhat forgetful of the ground of contention, save Mr. Vincent, who thanked his stars that he had escaped more of such a disagreeable discussion so easily.

"Providence protects those who need it!" was his pious afterthought.

In the afternoon George took his way to the station to meet his wife, and as he waited on the platform he wondered how he had best communicate to Lisa the bad news about her mother.

The train came in, and one after another the people got out of it—but to his dismay no Clara, no Lisa! nor had the guard or any one seen anything of either of them.

Of course they have missed their train, thought he; women when they are shopping always do.

They could not arrive now till nearly twelve at night, for no train stopped at Franewyk till then. Perhaps they would hardly arrange to come by that, but it was urgent that Lisa should be at Bloemenhof. He would go and bring them down. Clara he knew would go to the Doelen hotel; they always did, if they had to wait. Now he must wait for one hour and a half for a

train to take him up to Amsterdam, but that did not matter. He despatched a messenger to Roeland, and then prepared for his evening journey.

CHAPTER V.

"Ah! what a tangled web we weave
When first we labour to deceive!"

THE train into which Clara Randolph and Lisa van Hoevenaar had jumped in such haste, duly steamed away towards Amsterdam. After the first quarter of an hour, during which Lisa talked principally of her mother's health, they were silent --for there were others in the compartment, and they had not places beside each other. Clara, leaning back in her corner, contemplated Lisa with feelings somewhat like those of a cat, before it stretches out its paw to strike at the unsuspecting prey. So Clara

looked—longing for the time when, by the fame of her beauty, of her wealth and position, by the splendour of her attire, and by her power over others, she should have distanced her rival, and have ultimately compassed her downfall. Lately, a volcano of envious rage had been smouldering in Clara's mind; an ambitious restlessness to be first, a senseless craving that embittered her whole nature, and lit a fire that was never quenched. Since that visit to Bloemenhof, she had done nothing but long. Plans and schemes more or less feasible, and more or less honourable, unfolded themselves in her restless brain every hour of the day; she was no longer idle, she no longer complained of long vacant hours; now, every person who came near her who was not actually a stepping-stone was a hindrance and an obstacle, and she hated and avoided every one in conse quence.

One person indeed she never avoided and

that was Saltichus; he came day after day and lounged the long morning hours away, now on the sofa listening to her music, now looking at some drawing, or holding forth on some new theory of his own about Art or Life.

But then in some dim sort of way, she did look upon him as a stepping-stone; the hint he had dropped about the diamonds, certainly he had never renewed, but still Clara thought he had not forgotten it, and decidedly she had not. And his nature interested her; there was Light and Life to her in his coming; restlessness and want were expressed in every word and look of his, soothed indeed sometimes by her soft notes, but ever ready to burst forth at the lightest touch, and such restlessness and such want filled her own soul too. Unconsciously the sympathy between them grew.

Going to Amsterdam with Lisa was after all a change, an amusement, it was movement,

at least, after silence and solitude. The very action of the train made her breathe quicker, and her eyes brightened.

Shop after shop they entered, and one weighty matter after another they despatched. It was late when they stopped at the door of the great man who was the nominal head of the diamond-cutting establishment to ask for an order of admittance. A smart young clerk came out to the carriage, and his face illuminated itself with a gracious smile when he heard that Mrs. Randolph was the name of the lady to whom he was speaking.

"Oh, madam! an order is scarcely requisite for you! The name is so well-known in Holland! From Franewyk I think—"

"Exactly."

"Ah! but, madam, if you wait one moment, I will get it. It may be useful in future . . . . ."

"Yes!" said Clara quickly. "Give me one

that will admit me and my friends at any time. It is a curious sight I dare say, and English people coming over—"

"It will not be transferable," emphasised the polite clerk.

"Oh, no! of course not! I understand that."

He flew back into the house and they waited patiently.

Amsterdam was very gay, for it was the last day of the Kermesse, and the town was full of merry masses of people in bright costumes. The excitement of the town was delightful to Clara, and every moment she called Lisa's attention now to this strange head-dress, now to that quaint costume. A regiment was marching through, with band playing, and, when armed with their order, they proceeded on their way, they followed in the procession, for the streets were too narrow to allow them to pass. In the Dam Square bright stalls and merry-go-rounds took up the

space, and threading the Dutch crowd they found no easy task.

And so at last, after laughing faces, mirth and holiday making in the bright sunshine, suddenly into darkness, chaos, humanity struggling and striving; a Babel of voices and of powers, a Babel of passions, begun here to be ended with earth itself. Smoke, heat, harsh voices, dark swarthy faces, a noise of loud singing—hell itself. Lisa shrank close to Clara; the scene and the deafening sounds prevented her for the first few moments from listening to the grave man who was explaining everything to them. His words fell out of his mouth as if they had been cut and pared to a pattern by some machine; he, gravely talking, with so little life, so little emotion, seemed to Lisa like a part of the huge machinery itself.

The workmen sat in a row, and on, through the rush and the roar of the great engines ever rose and fell the sound of their song;

fierce eyes and wild-looking faces peered at the two women as they stood there; the weighty wheels turned round, turning at the same time a hundred or more minute lathes, and the deep tones of the workmen's song sounded like the hoarse music of another region, such as one may have pictured to oneself in terror-stricken moments; a strange vent for ill-stifled passion and scarce restrained power.

Before each man the lathes turned at their giddy pace, and there on the board, and on the shelves above and around, were the sparkling gems. Clara's eyes danced as she saw. What to her were explanations given? What did she care for diamond dust or for the number of facets required! What for three hundred workmen! here, there, everywhere, were what she wanted. Let Lisa talk and listen; how swiftly the great engine twirled away in the midst; did it come from below? and did the lathes turn two thousand

times a minute? Let them! Lisa must answer. As for her, she must see! her eyes glistened as she walked slowly round; and she wandered away looking at the strange singing cutters, to the obvious discomfort of both Lisa and the guide. But what was that to her? Diamonds were her life, her all, now! So, looking, envying, wondering, hesitating, hungering, on she walked; here pale yellow, and here pale blue, diamonds met her view, here a magnificent rose diamond, and here a less valuable green one arrested her attention.

"From Asia!" said the cutter laconically, seeing she was looking at it. Passing on a few steps, presently she uttered an exclamation of surprise. Here was the diamond-cutter who had come to Franewyk; he touched his cap as he rose from his bench. She smiled, then stopped to speak. One after another he displayed to her brilliants and gems of different shades and different

sizes. Clara allowed her longing fingers to touch.

He told her about the cutting, saying how the number of facets increased the value and brilliancy. But she hardly listened; her eyes devoured them. Then, suddenly, he brought out for her inspection a blue diamond; it was like Lisa's; it was a darker blue; it was more beautiful still.

"But two more like to that," said the man, looking at it lovingly. "One is lost, the other is in the Van Franckenburg family," and he bowed and smiled towards Lisa as he spoke.

"Ah! don't show it to her!" said Clara, from some sudden unaccountable impulse.

She bent her head down over it, as she crimsoned with shame. Seeing her attention absorbed, the man stooped towards her; he seemed to be reaching a tool.

"Madame, I have a word—for your ear alone—I want——"

He stopped as though in doubt.

"I know. You want a place at the harbour."

"Yes. But I want to tell you why. You would not betray me If I could tell, I am sure you would help me."

"Yes," said she, hesitating.

"If you would let me see you alone?"

"At Franewyk."

"It is so far. Not here? To-day? Could I not?"

"We go back at five o'clock."

"The train might be missed," said he, with a flattering tone.

The man's coolness took her breath away; yet she was just in that state that she would do anything for the sake of the adventure, and to see what would come of it. Besides —these diamonds!—who could tell? it might be in his power——

"Yes; as you say, the train might be missed." She looked up and met his eyes,

and even then shrank at the defiant reckless face she saw before her. "Come to the Klovenierstrug this evening at eight o'clock."

The man was profuse with acknowledgments, and bowed low as he expressed his gratitude in words borrowed from every language under the sun.

With heightened colour but firm step Clara walked back down the long room, where Lisa was awaiting her impatiently.

"I found the man," said Clara, "and gave him George's message; about the place, you know. You remember him, Lisa?"

"Oh, yes! Had you a message?"

"Yes, of course. One of my objects in coming."

Afterwards to a little cupboard of a room where models were shown them of the Mogul diamond, of the Koh-i-noor, and of others that have played conspicuous parts in human history; and listening to an account of the lapidary's skill, Clara showed such an

absorbing interest that the time wore away, and Lisa wondered when she would be free.

Even once again in their carriage, Clara remembered some other purchase that she must make, and, arrived at the shop, she left Lisa to wait in the carriage. When at last they reached the station, the train had gone just five minutes before.

Such abject despair was depicted on Clara's countenance, Lisa had absolutely to re-assure and console her.

"But what shall we do?" asked Clara at last; "there is no train down now till ten. What can we do?"

Lisa was silent.

"To wait at the station all that time!"

"We must go and dine somewhere."

"And sleep? and go down by the first train in the morning."

"If you like. It will be better than waking up the household at midnight."

Another half hour saw them installed, weary and cross, in a sitting-room at the Doelen Hotel. Clara was too dejected to be scolded, and, indeed, she never seemed to think that she was to blame. They sat almost silent, resting and waiting for their dinner.

Yet, as she lay silent among the sofa cushions, roseate visions of all sorts of strange things were busy floating through Clara's brain. What should she hear? what could the man have to tell her? what secret was it? and once the possessor of his tale, what could she not do with him? he would be her instrument to steal, or to lie, or—to get her that blue diamond that would eclipse Lisa's.

The dinner ready, up she started to face her rival, and to bewilder her with foolish talk and wild caressing flatteries, that soon turned Lisa's head, and made her forget Roeland's probable anxiety and her mother's illness.

No subject alarmed Clara; she talked confidingly of George, of her father, praised Roeland, pitied her own life, her poverty, her solitude, her dependence; Lisa was almost melted to tears as she heard, then said, as Clara came near her chair and sought her hand:

"You must come to Bloemenhof more; you must be always there; we must be more to each other."

"Ah! look at the moonlight, Lisa; is it not lovely?" and stationed herself at the window as she spoke.

Silvering the water and the slow passing barges, making black shadows here, and long lines of dazzling white there, the calm moon rose over the city. It was earth transformed to fairy-land. The hum and din of the day had ceased; distant music struck on the ear; solitary figures passed here and there; the feathery trees waved to and fro in gentle unrest, and every moment the moon climbed

higher and higher, marching calmly across that sea of blue.

"Lisa," said Clara, impetuously, "I must go out. It is too beautiful. It is Heaven. You are too tired?"

"Yes."

"I must be alone. I must go. A scene like this sends me wild always. It takes one away from earth. It takes one straight to Heaven. I must go and look into the water. I must feel the moonlight on my face. Look! we have the night before us, and I shan't be a minute."

"All right, dear. Go."

Lisa drew the sofa to the window, and, once alone, listening to the soft lapping of the water against the houses, her identity faded from her mind; she was soon far away in spirit-land, lost in bright dreams and fair visions; she looked unearthly and spiritual herself with that cold sheen on her face, for there was no light in the room beyond the

silvery moonbeams, and the reflection of their play on the water below.

Thus George Randolph found her.

"George!" exclaimed she, with a soft surprise.

"Madame van Franckenburg!"

The sound of her name recalled her to herself.

She started up, ordering lights, and excusing herself for being in the dark while she was waiting for Clara.

"Waiting for Clara? Why; where is she?"

"Gone out; it is so lovely. I would have gone too, but I was tired."

Then she explained how they had missed their train, and that they had made up their minds to stay the night.

George dissembled his dissatisfaction as best he might, then asked permission to put the lamp into a distant part of the room.

"The moonlight is glorious. Our northern Venice looks so beautiful to-night."

Sitting there opposite her, both looking out on the splendour of the evening, he sought about for suitable words wherewith to tell her of her mother's state.

"I am sorry Clara is out. I think you should come back to Franewyk to-night if you can. Madame van Hoevenaar . . . ."

"Ah!" she rose with a start, and leaned against the window-frame. "Ah! you were sent; she is worse—ill—there is danger. You will not deceive me . . . ." She put out her hand blindly.

"There is danger," he said, gravely standing beside her. "Where is Clara? Let us go at once."

They had to wait; it was not time yet, and Clara had not come in.

The mocking moon! the dazzling night! their glory had faded now for Lisa.

"It is always so, George. I might have known it. When we are very happy, and I was then—in heaven, I think: the next mo-

ment we are dashed down very low. God takes us to Himself perhaps first for a moment, to give us strength for the coming storm."

CHAPTER VI.

"*Marg.* It was an error merely, and no crime,
An unsuspecting openness in youth,
That from his lips the fatal secret drew,
Which should have slept like one of nature's
mysteries
Unveil'd by any man."

"JOHN WOODVIL."

A MAN'S figure standing on the bridge, leaning against the rails, and looking at the passers-by. A high-peaked hat was slouched over his face, a cloak concealed his figure.

It could not be the poor diamond cutter, dressed thus .... Clara was on the point of returning, when the man stepped forward.

"Vrouw Randolph?"

"Yes."

"You are good, lady: I will not keep you. You are good. But come into the shadow, not here, where we shall be seen and heard."

He walked on, Clara following him.

She smiled to herself as she thought what George would only say if he could see her now; she did not care.

The plash of the barges slowly dropping along was the only sound near to them; distant figures passed now and again, but to Clara they were dream-shadows, as faint, and as unreal; a distant clock or bell tolling struck with its clear vibration on the diamond cutter's ear, but to Clara it was nothing; a sound from a land far off from this, a voice in an unknown tongue. Time and surroundings were alike nothing to her; she was in an excited over-wrought state, and she knew nothing, cared for nothing, but for the words

that should fall from her strange companion's lips. There in the black depths of shadow they stood; below, the water slumbered at their feet.

Clara, looking up, saw the man's bright eyes fixed on her face; they gleamed strangely on her.

"Begin!" said she, in an authoritative manner.

He was silent still for another moment, then in broken English, mixing therewith Dutch, French, and Portuguese, Clara was able to sift the following story from the torrent of language that was poured into her ear:

"Lady, you are brave. I respect your courage, and trust a woman once more. Hear my story—but grant me secrecy."

"You may trust me."

"I come from Borneo. I remember nothing before I lived there; I never knew father or mother, but they must have worked

in the mines, and I worked there too. My only friends for years were the monkeys; and the green trees, and the jungle with the thick flowering shrubs, and scarlet leaves, made my home. Borneo, you know, is the receptacle of iniquity of other countries, but we were kind to each other too. If we were hungry, or ill, or in pain, we cared for, and we helped each other sometimes. And our dream there is wealth. Precious metals, glittering gems, and balmy spices, pearls and corals, are before our poor hungry eyes from day to day. I, as soon as I was old enough, hungered with the rest. Then birds, trees, and rushing streams were all forgotten by me; I was strong, and I worked doubly as hard as any of the others. They thought much of me, 'Dino' (that was my name) 'will do it,' they said; and others envied me.

"The mountains there rise to the sky; my dreams rose there too. And so I toiled, and

my fame spread, and the masters made haste to employ me. In the gold mines of Malay, in the Chindras, in the mountains of Bukit and Panchas, in the Straits of Sunda, at Penang, in Sumatra I toiled, nothing came amiss; so, back to the cinnabar mines of Borneo, where we tended the furnaces and saw the dazzling quicksilver rushing out, forced away from the red cinnabar by the fierce flames. And there we sought for and found the diamond.

"How patiently they sit and sift the beds of the rivers! What weary work it is; but one is rewarded. And I—Dino—did not forget myself. I toiled and toiled, and they praised my zeal, sometimes laughed at my ill-success, never knew how often I kept my treasure. In my mouth—oh! a hundred ways I had; they never knew. I had always done it, and so, I had a treasure. Gems and brilliants, pearls and gold and diamonds. In a great iron chest I kept it, and the chest I

hid in the hollow branch of a great tree where I slept always. The chest was far above my bed; no one knew of the hollow branch.

"So, for years I amassed my wealth. Green and many pure water diamonds, and a blue diamond—that I told you to-day was lost, and so it has been. But I have come to Holland to find it."

Clara started.

"How?"

"Listen. I was weak; I loved—as we southern reckless natures do love, till we are deceived and then we hate. Life fled so fast, dreams were so bright, it could not last. We were to be princes, a king and queen; we were to escape to another country with our treasure, we were to be free and great and noble. So we dreamed. I am slow in telling you."

"Go on," said Clara.

"There came a storm; ships were wrecked;

an Englishman was thrown ashore at Borneo. An English sailor, with his handsome fair face and flattering ways; she had never seen such men before. He cast his eyes on her, she was the beauty of the island; they told him to beware him of 'Dino;' little he recked; little those English sailors think anything save of each other. And she listened to all he said, and told him of my treasure; one day I awoke to find it gone, and he was gone —but she—although she had loved him—was left behind—a wreck—a creature nursing a great wrong, which God or I will revenge. The man's name was John Lord."

Surprise held Clara speechless.

"She had told him all; how I had gained my diamonds, how I had dreamed about them, how I had meant to bring them to Amsterdam to be cut, when we were free, for there the natives are not skilful, and the Dutch lapidaries are famed. And as she talked, the traitor answered her, said that he was free,

that he was no slave, 'give him the treasure, come with him and be queen, princess and life to him—but take the treasure, for half is her's already surely.' 'But Dino will find out.' 'We will bury it deep,' said he, 'deep down in Maeslem Meer, for he had been to Holland before, and remembered it was not very far from Amsterdam—and then when Dino has lost both us and it, we will come back and be rich —and she should be beautiful!' She buried her face in her scarlet sarong as she said it to me afterwards, and hid her flashing eyes away. Vrouw Randolph, I have vowed by all that I hold sacred, by my life, which I have risked already, by leaving Borneo—and by that woman, who I forgave afterwards, because she had been so punished, that I will find again that treasure—and that I will kill John Lord. Help me!"

Clara watched the moonbeams playing on the water for a full minute in silence. All at once it had come to her, that this treasure buried

was not known to Dino alone! This strange tale explained many of Saltichus' words and schemes, that had been hitherto unfathomable. What if they should both be striving for the same prize? both seeking for the same object?

"If it should not be there . . . ." said she at last.

"It is there. It was buried as he said in the sea: a man from the Helder helped him, a diver whom he got. Do you think I have not had spies, have not worked and sought, have not been told of the legend of the buried treasure, and—oh!—it is there! Get me my place in the harbour, that I may go down fifty fathoms deep, that I may dive and dig and dig—that I may be rich and get my precious stones; and, lady! some of the diamonds will not look amiss on your fair brow!" . . . .

(The same bribe as Saltichus had offered for the field!)

"What place will you take at the harbour?"

"Any. The roughest, the hardest, I do not care! I do not fear work; it has been so all my life. Diver, or dredger, or any thing that shall give me a right to be on the spot at any hour of the night or day. A week would be enough, and then I could go."

"Where?"

"To America, to seek John Lord—or—anywhere. I do not care!"

A clock struck nine.

"I must go!" said Clara. "You shall hear from me, or—if I cannot write, I will come to the diamond cutting, where I saw you to-day."

He thanked her, and offered to see her back to her friend.

"Should he follow her at a distance?"

Clara Randolph did not care! she kept him beside her, till they were in sight of the hotel.

On the way she could not forbear asking

him how he had learnt so much, where education had been given to him.

"Necessity, madame, has been my teacher, Since I made my escape from the mines, I have never ceased doing something, learning always. I could not come straight to Europe. I was in India and China first. In the course of my life I have mixed with Asiatics of every shade, and with Europeans of all nations. In Borneo, there are Dutch, French, Portuguese and Swedes to be found, and nothing makes a man learn a language so fast as the wish to be understood. I have been most with the Portuguese. I am more a Portuguese than any thing else."

A few doors from the hotel, Clara signed to him to go; he lifted his hat, and stood bare headed till she was some paces away.

Randolph was smoking a cigar on the steps of the hotel as Clara came leisurely sauntering up. She started as she saw him.

"My goodness! You here?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Has Lisa told you how we missed our train? Wasn't it tiresome?"

"Oh yes! she told me—and also how you gave my message to the diamond cutter."

Clara laughed lightly.

"Not your message; she mistakes. The poor man wants helping. Be charitable, George. But why have you come? was anything the matter? We come down by the first train in the morning."

"You will come down to-night. Madame van Hoevenaar is dying."

CHAPTER VII.

"'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,
Fall into shadow, soonest lost:
Those we love first are taken first.

. . . . . .

His memory long will live alone
In all our hearts, as mournful light
That broods above the fallen sun,
And dwells in heaven half the night."

"To J. S."—TENNYSON.

ROELAND drove off swiftly from the office, and despatching a message to the cover-side, where his guns and dogs were awaiting him, for he had intended to shoot, he turned his horse's head towards Bloemenhof, and arrived in time to

meet Dr. Saltichus going out of the gate as he went in.

"I have just come from her," said Saltichus. "I can do no good, but I will return later."

"How is she?"

"Madame van Hoevenaar is perfectly calm and sensible; she is asking for you; it will not be long now! I will come back, but I have been sent for."

Roeland passed on. A few minutes later saw him at the door of the little room that had been devoted to her use; it went by the name of the Baroness' Boudoir. She had chosen the room herself when she had come to live with Lisa at Bloemenhof, remembering it in her younger days, when she used to sit in the bow-window, looking out on the country and the golden sunlight with Roeland's mother.

She was sitting in a low chair by the open window. The birds singing outside made a strange contrast with the stillness of the room on this bright September morning.

"Was that — could that be — death?" thought Roeland. "So happy—so peaceful. It is going to sleep; nothing more."

He closed the door after him, and the two maids who were beside her rose. One of them held a book of prayers.

Madame van Hoevenaar slightly raised one of her hands, as she smiled. She knew his step.

"Roeland—my son!"

He went to her, unable to speak, and stooped to kiss her hand as he knelt beside her.

The two women went away then.

"And Lisa?" murmured she.

"Not yet, mother. But she will come."

"Oh, yes! she will come."

The birds sang outside, and the white clouds sailed by, while Roeland hung on her lightest breath.

"Roeland," said she at last, "it is a glorious autumn. I feel it so, and I am going home.

I am glad!" He started painfully; to him death was a great blank, a great doubt, a mystery, a severance from all that he held dear. "I used to think I should see clearly just once again before I went away, but now I know it will not be so. This is my last day here. The earth is very beautiful, is it not, Roeland? When I was young I thought so."

He could not trust himself to speak; he could not make up his mind yet to part with this more than friend. She guessed his pain:

"Hush, Roeland! I have been such a burden, and now God is taking me to Him. There will be no more darkness; there I shall have music, and light, and beautiful birds, and the presence of His glory and of His love always. Here I could do so little for Him of late."

"Shall I send for anyone—to the Hague —to——"

"No, Roeland. It is so peaceful now, and it might pain them. So few understand what it is to be coming into a burst of splendour after so many years of darkness. I could only hear their voices——"

Her face was turned to the window.

"The birds understand," said she in a few moments. She had been listening to their joyous, full-throated songs.

"I wish Lisa had not gone to-day," said Roeland.

"But she understands. Last night I thought good-night was good-bye, but I would not tell her. And she knows. It is only for a time. By-and-by we shall all meet. . . . . Roeland, you will care for her always, and trust her; she's so good—so——"

"I know, I know," sobbed he.

"And, Roeland, you will come with her?"

"Where?"

"To Heaven. I must find my son again.

Dear Roeland, be good, be great here. . . . God is so great. We should study His nature, and live by it."

"Yes."

"Now, at the end, this all comes to one. One can't be too great, one can't forgive enough, or give enough. Little ambitions fade away so entirely, unless, indeed, they rise to rebuke us; God rewards our sacrifices, and gives us sweetness for all that seemed hard. Oh, Roeland! anything I have ever given up for others comes back like a sweet song in my ears to-day."

"Mother, dear mother," said Roeland, strongly excited, "do not leave us. Cannot my hands hold you back? Live yet, and teach us to love God better."

The simple words of the sightless woman seemed to be taking the cloud away from Roeland's eyes that had veiled them so long.

"God has called me at last, Roeland.

It has been such long waiting, dear boy."

Then he was silent, and tried to restrain his selfish grief.

Then others came in, the clergyman, who had been sent for—a brother of the Baroness from the Hague — and, later, Saltichus again.

The doctor's attentions were unremitting; his unobtrusive sympathy surprised, as it won Roeland.

It was some time before he was alone again with her, and then he had been sent for.

"It is over now, Roeland," said she with a strange gleam of happiness on her face. "They wanted to put me to bed, but I would die so, with the sunshine close to me, and the life of the world all about me. Tell Lisa; she will understand. And now, good-bye, my son, for a time. Good-bye. Guard her; and God bless you and love you both."

Then she tried to kiss him; but weakness was gaining upon her, and the silence of death came nearer every moment.

Saltichus was in the next room, he came at Roeland's call, and presently the rest followed, standing around her chair.

There was the same peaceful smile on her face right to the end, the same hope, the same trust; she held Roeland's hand in hers, his other arm supported her slight frame. Only by the coldness of her hand did they know of the end. Truly, God's love shielded her; truly, as a child, she fell asleep.

Then Roeland shut himself up with his grief, and learned, as he suffered, the lesson that Lisa had so long tried to teach him.

His eyes were opened at last and he saw. Her faith had given sight to the blind. Light came to him in his hour of darkness and sorrow, and as he writhed under the sense of his waywardness, as regrets filled his mind for former thoughtless harmful words,

for selfish deeds, he wondered at God's long-suffering, and then cast about in his mind how he could make reparation, how he could begin to be great, and how by a pure example of unselfishness he could set forth to men a principle by which to live.

Just then Saltichus passed the window:

"The field!" thought Roeland; "I was ungenerous there. Poor man! it must be terrible to have no inch of ground to call one's own. He shall have it."

And he wrote a note to Randolph, giving it over to him without reservation, and withdrawing at once from all competition.

Later, when at midnight Lisa came home, there was a new sort of radiance on his face that was strange to her.

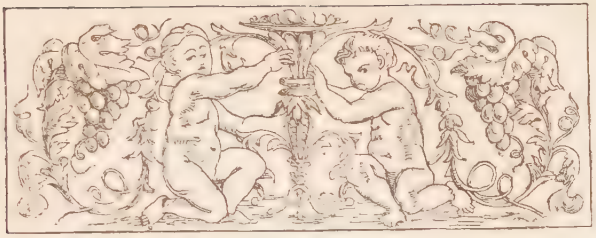
"Roeland, what is it?" asked she, timidly, through her tears.

They were standing in the chamber of death, and he had taken her in his arms. He was not looking so unhappy as he should,

thought Lisa, half frightened, and yet there was something so noble. . . .

"What is it?" asked she.

"Only," said he, "that I have found a God at last, and that it has made a man of me."



CHAPTER VIII.

"For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She, like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devils' leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!"

IDYLLS OF THE KING.

NEXT morning Clara, who had never remembered yet to regret having kept Lisa away from her mother during her last moments, had not forgotten to press the diamond cutter's wants to Randolph. But she had met with unexpected

opposition. The fact was, he was irritated—and reasonably. Just as his work was nearing completion, just as he was touching the prize, and success and fame were all but his, to find one drop of poison at the bottom of the cup, slowly spreading, and threatening to permeate itself through his whole life. Mr. Vincent's and Roeland's words about the field rankled in his mind; Clara had evidently been endeavouring to manage something in reference to the transaction, independently of him.

"I think, Clara, it will be better if once for all we arrange that you never dream of interfering with my work."

He was eating his egg at breakfast as he said this, answering her about the diamond cutter.

She stopped pouring out his tea, and looked at him amazed.

"It will be better so."

Then there was silence. She brought

him his tea and went back to her place.

"What was that about a piece of land that Saltichus wants? it seems that you know?"

"Ah! as you say," remarked she, putting down a piece of bread covered with jam that was on its way to her mouth, and leaning her chin reflectively on her hand, "what was that? I remember hearing my father talking to him about it in this very house one day. What was it, George?"

Her innocent effort of memory misled him, and he told her about it, not forgetting to give her his opinion of her father.

After that she ventured to refer again to the diamond cutter.

"I have nothing for him to do; and why should I oblige him?"

It was time for Clara to show her superiority. Christianity had always taught her that we should never turn a deaf ear to any

want, and this would cost George so little. The poor man looked so ill, and no wonder. "Oh, George! what a place that must be to live in. I should die in an hour."

A half promise was extorted, and then Randolph drove off to the office, leaving Clara to puzzle her head as best she might over Dino's story, and her husband's cross temper.

As for herself, she was in low spirits this morning; she was nearly certain now, having slept over it, that Saltichus and the diamond cutter were both seeking for the same prize, and if so, what chance of any pickings had she? She would like to begin a search on her own account at once, but then that husband of her's was such a drag on any enterprise; and what can a woman do in such an affair all by herself? Would Mrs. Lord be of any use? but then she remembered that both Saltichus and that fierce Dino had had the first shots there, and if anything were to be got

thereby, they had probably got it by this time.

No; she had better help one or the other; for the present, till she could see a little clearer, she must help both. It is no good to try to back a winner, till you have seen something of his paces, and what chance he has. Meanwhile they would both be in her power, and, in any case, they might be very useful some day.

Randolph was just out of sight, she felt freer now he was gone.

Meanwhile he went to the shore, and there meeting Guy, who had just heard of Madame van Hoevenaar's death, they soon afterwards fell to talking of the land that had proved such a bone of contention the day before.

"I hope Saltichus will not get it," said Guy.

"I fancy Roeland will never give it up;" for then Randolph had not got the note that was waiting for him inside the house.

"Guy," he went on, "it might be as well to know all about it in case Vincent should come down again to-day. I have stupidly left the papers at home in my private room. I wonder, after you have gone your rounds, if you would mind taking the trolly and fetching them."

"Not the least in the world, George. Anything to oblige a friend."

Two hours later saw him entering the hall by the wide open door, and to avoid wasting time, he crossed it at once to Randolph's room, instead of going through the drawing-room. The door into the drawing-room was, however, ajar, and Guy, deep in papers and documents, half-an-hour after, was surprised by suddenly hearing voices; presently two people came into the next room, from the garden.

It was Saltichus's voice; and Clara's answered him again. They seemed to sit down together on the sofa near the window.

There was no pretence of music this morning. Guy was going to discover himself, and then he became so powerfully interested, so, to himself seemingly, implicated, that he dared neither speak or move.

This is what Saltichus was saying :

"You blame, me, I see. You think I should have told the wife. Well, hear me out. I will try to tell you the whole thing. I cannot bear you should think badly of me. Your sympathy has been so precious to me of late. I could not lose it."

"Then you must tell me all—quite all."

"I will try. I have never told human being yet. It will be rough, crude, and I may make mistakes—for one forgets other people's stories. Well; as I was saying, I was in New York, and I had worked so hard there that success was mine; I had toiled up to a very respectable height along the road of fame, and I had a large practice. One night —it was terribly cold, and I had gone to bed

dog-tired—I was called up to go to a poor English sailor. I cannot say I was pleased, for I had tended him before, and I knew I could do nothing to save him. However, once, twice, thrice came the summons, and at the last I really went.

"'My poor fellow,' said I, 'I can do nothing for you.'

"'I know that, sir,' said he, 'I know my last hour's come, but I have something to say before I can die easy.'

"After all, these death-bed confessions are very wearisome, but one can't well get out of them, and I'd taken an interest in the man, because he was English, and because of his cheery rollicking manner. Then, too, he wanted so hard to live! So that I had been to him often, and we had made friends. His name was John Lord."

"Dead!" exclaimed Clara. "And you have never told Jane!"

"Listen! Before you judge—you shall

hear the reason with the story. She believed so thoroughly in him living, it was hard to undeceive her. Then, too, it would have altered the whole thing if she had known. I could not have gone to her as I did—I . . . ."

"Selfish!" exclaimed Clara.

"You are thinking if you were free, and some one knew it and never told you, he would be a brute."

Guy waited for the answer, but it never came.

"Shall I tell you John Lord's story," asked Saltichus of Clara in a moment.

"Yes."

"He said:

"'Doctor, I have sent for you. The only man I'd like to trust, for you are rich, and have plenty of all you want; and it's about money I want to talk. Temptation to you won't be so hard to resist as it would to poor fellows, such as I know. I wanted to live,

doctor, but it isn't to be. I'm off, to-night, I fancy.'

"We were quite alone then, for he had sent away another man who was with him when I came; and there was nothing but a wretched sputtering candle by the bed-side, that threw strange gleams and strange shadows on his face and about the room.

"'My story's soon told, doctor, and I can't make it long, for the breath won't hold out. I've got a wife, doctor, and I've got a treasure buried. Now I can't get home to one or the other. The woman's name is Jane Lord: she comes from Didington, in Warwickshire, and though, maybe, she's not there now, yet there you would easily hear of her; she lives with her father, and he goes about to different places where his work takes him.'

"'And the treasure?' asked I.

"'The treasure,' said he, 'is buried safe in Maeslem Meer, in Holland.'

"'What am I to do?' I asked.

"'Why! find the treasure, and give half to my wife, half to yourself. You'll do that for me, doctor?'

"He raised himself up on his elbow in the bed as he spoke, and brought his anxious eyes, his thin unshaved face, very near to mine. What could I do? I promised. Then from under his pillow he brought out a little dirty scrap of paper, and shoved it into my hand.

"'That is for Jane. I always promised her a proof when I should be dead. It ain't fair on a woman not to tell her. And it's to tell her of the diamonds, too: she never knew of them, for I was afraid of telling her, and though she's not one to care much for such things, yet women are such fools; she might have told the whole British navy . . . .'

"How strange it is," said Saltichus, breaking off, and suddenly interrupting himself, "how strange it is; telling you of that night. It all comes to me, every word, every look

of that man's, as vividly as if it were yesterday."

"How did he get his treasure?" asked Clara.

"Ah!" said he. "That was a wonderful tale. Will you listen to it?"

"Go on." She was as excited as he was.

"I can't tell you as he told it. This is something of what he said:

"'We were in Hong-Kong harbour, and a long voyage we'd had of it. After that we were to be homeward-bound. It was homeward-bound, indeed, to heaven or to hell, as the case might be, for while we were there, we came in for a typhoon.'

"What a night it must have been; to hear that dying man tell it made one's hair stand on end.

"'An awful boom, a sound as of a world in pain, a supernatural terrible roar, coming no one knew whence, ending no one knew

where. A dead stillness, and danger, destruction, death in its depth. Masts broken, torn cables, cracking timbers, sinking vessels, sharp human cries of distress, the trumpet orders of the captain, and fearful darkness. In such a sea no boat could live a moment, and death stared them in the face.

"Lord said then, through it all, though they strained every nerve to live, though sometimes the act of the struggle made them forget their pain and suffering, yet—present and future alike forgot—his past life rose before him, and past actions stood written in words of fire on his brain. Their anchor-chains gave way, and drifting, plunging, tossed by the seething waves, on they went through a thousand perils, dragging their anchors for miles, destroying everything that came in their road, and at last they split on an island in the China Seas. The next morning the sun shone out on the top-gallant of the vessel, and on the green island which

John Lord and two comrades only had succeeded in reaching. Do I weary you, Mrs. Randolph ?"

"No. Where was he ? what did he do ?"

"For some time it was a life of misery, of struggling, of endurance. One of the three sailors fell ill, ultimately died, the two remaining buried him, and lived for some time on those beautiful islands waiting for a good chance to come home, and doing a stroke of work when it came in their way. In truth they were happy enough. They went to Malacca; it was Paradise to them, green lawns sloping to the sea, eternal summer days of holiday. Even when he was dying, John Lord's face lit up as he told me of those beautiful islands. 'A land to him where it is always afternoon.' Of the fireflies, that sparkle at night all over the trees, of the bright beetles and thousands of insects, and of the tigers and the snakes, which, like Englishmen, they must try to meet. And

ultimately he went to Borneo, where Cupid's darts brought the poor English tar in contact with a beautiful girl, who it seems was already bespoken by a handsome young Portuguese. The Briton, however, won her heart, and not only that, but learnt also her master's secrets, for she told him of a great treasure, amassed by the brave Portuguese—a collection of diamonds and gold and precious stones, and moreover of a wonderful blue diamond which this man had contrived to hide, although its loss had already occasioned much disturbance and speculation. John no sooner knew of all this than he laid his plans. Having heard at Salangore and Deli, and in the cinnabar mines of Borneo that all these diamonds are sent to Holland to be cut, he conceived the plan of bringing them over and burying them here in the sea, till such time as he should be free, and his rival dead, or at least his traces lost. As for the girl, he forgot her as soon as she talked about the trea-

sure; though he made use of her, and up to the time of his departure, told her she was to come too. The Portuguese was not free like the English sailor; she believed all he said. The risk was great to him, but the prize was worth it. And he succeeded. The treasure in his keeping, the woman waiting, the Portuguese off his guard—the dark night came. The early morning broke—he was sailing away through those balmy and odorous isles; the green and scarlet shone from that setting of the deep blue sea; the diamonds were his, the woman he had loved was left behind, the Portuguese perhaps had not awoke to his loss yet! So to Singapore—thence to Europe."

"Well?"

"Well then—at last he arrived at the Helder, and there casting about in his mind what he was to do for the present with his treasure, for he feared detection and he was then on a voyage, bound ultimately to New

York, he happened to come across a diver—who seemed likely to suit his purpose. Down for two or three nights running they came to Maeslem Meer, and during the cold moonlight hours, they—for John Lord pumped in air while his confederate dug—they worked till they had found a holding depth in which they could bury the prize. As luck would have it, for Satan helps his own—the diver, who might have turned out troublesome in the end, died the next week after the feat."

"Then the treasure is in the sea now?"

"No; it isn't!"

"Why, if everybody's dead?"

"The place—the spot in the sea—its distance from the land, was on the scrap of paper that Lord gave me for his wife, and toil and weary work I have had. But—Maeslem Meer has been reclaimed since then; that part of it at least, and his directions were almost useless."

"Well?"

"Well! that is why I want my field! The blue diamond—the treasure for which I have given up everything—practice, fame, friends, is there!"

"You threw up your practice to find it?"

"Immediately. If you had toiled for years, slaved, and toiled and hated and served, and suddenly a short cut to the end were shown you, would not you cast to the winds all the former aims, and take the short cut? I have not found it. I have had to work and to go through something for it, but I am on it now! I have only one man in the world to fear—but think what miles of weary waste sever us! The Portuguese in Borneo—how is he to find me? He may hate me—the woman John Lord wronged may hate me—with a true, a southern hatred—They may thirst for vengeance. But why should I care!

"'Fear him, sir!' said the dying sailor. "He would cross the world to kill me if

he could find me, and the treasure is his. If he once has wind of it, he will find it sooner or later, and any one in his path he will make short work of.'

"'How can I know him?' I asked.

"Lord was silent while he thought: then he said,

"'He wears a gold ring; a little plain rough gold ring, beaten by his own hands out of a nugget he found. The woman had just such another. I took it from her in play one day, and gave her one instead. Her's is in the chest; his is on his hand. A sign of revenge owed, I fancy, till he has my blood.'

"And then he fell to maudlin sentiment, asked me if I knew what he was doing, what a dreadful thing it was to die before he could touch his treasure—how he had dreamed over it and what castles in the air he had built for himself and his wife. Not that she cared for diamonds, he added,—I meant to teach her what they would bring her.'"

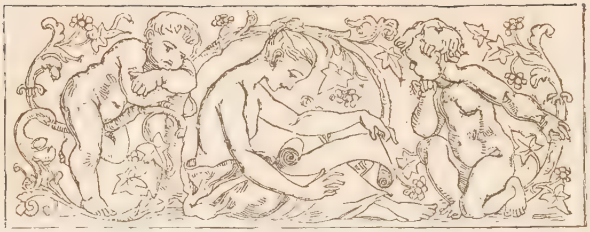
"And so have I too built castles now, and dreamed dreams—and now I near the goal—I shall have, I shall taste, I shall hold. Clara, can you fancy it? Power after scorn, ease after toil, worship after ridicule,—smiles, love, the exaltation and the pride of life—Clara"—he broke off suddenly—"get me my field, and diamonds, wealth and luxury are yours—Clara," said he suddenly, "life might be made very sweet with you——"

"How about Mrs. Lord?" asked Mrs. Randolph suddenly. Guy laughed to himself through his surprise, at her presence of mind.

After that, they got up and sunned themselves on the terrace. Guy took the opportunity to close the drawers, selecting the papers Randolph required. As he saw them walking away across the garden, as he saw Clara bidding Saltichus good-bye at the gate, one fervent wish was in Guy's heart—one fervent vow expressed there; 'that the fellow should not have the land at any price.'

He went down to the sea, and Randolph met him at the door, with Roeland's note in his hand:

"No use for the papers, just too late. The field is his: Roeland gives it up to him."



CHAPTER IX.

"Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
But, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure—then pity—then embrace."

POPE.

ONE by one the soft grey masses of cloud were dispelled, one by one they became tinged with alternating shades of pink, blue, soft white, and purple, as the sun arose in his might. Guy Travers looked on absorbed in thought. One by one the boulders of rock, the piers, the sand-hills stretching away along the shore, stood out in clear distinctness, no longer black undistinguishable heaps of rough colour hastily laid

on. The details grew, and the world awoke. The waves caught the refrain of the song from the shore, and joyously echoed Nature's greeting to the sun, catching bright hues from the mantling sky of colour above, and revelling in lights of many tints as they hastened, tumbling one over the other to the dazzling sands. What to Guy was the gaudy painting? What to him was Nature's story? He had a story now in his head that had prevented his sleeping and had made him rise thus early, which was to him far more wonderful, far more interesting. After all, nothing but man profoundly interests man; failing him, he will study nature now and then.

Guy was a very different character from Hector Saltichus, from the diamond cutter, and from Clara Randolph. To have a secret was to have a burden almost heavier than he could bear: he could not let it be still; he must do something with it. Hence his misery

and restlessness when he had formerly suspected Saltichus' identity, only the necessity of silence had imposed it upon him. Now that some one, Jane Lord for instance, was being wronged by silence, it was almost impossible for him to maintain it. A thousand thoughts and doubts and schemes busied themselves in his brain. It was to him hateful that the woman should be a widow and never know it; worse that he should know it, and never tell her. And yet how could he! How tell one part of the story and not the rest. Then he wondered if, after all, had Saltichus told her by this time: for they were friends. No! surely not! because of the treasure, which then he must share. Then, would he never tell her? Ah, yes! Guy would see to it: certainly he should tell her then, and share and share loyally. How rich he would be! And then another thought,—unlike to Guy—born of the work and servitude he had done lately, and of the complainings from his mother

and sisters and broken-down father at home came into his mind. If after all he should turn out to be a Travers—to set up the family once more . . . . a vision of a beloved hunter, of a glorious run in a splendid grass-country; rose before him—and then he dashed it away. "There would be nothing for me! he hates me! and if there were, it could bring no good to us, earned so!"

But for the man to have that land, to be able to take a spade any day, and go and dig up all that treasure—oh! it was loathsome! Guy stared at the sun-rise, and at the world becoming more gay every moment, and hated humanity for a moment, and his own helplessness. Could he do nothing? could he tell no one? could he not tell Randolph, Roeland, Lisa, every one? But he knew he could not. He ought never to have heard it as he did; it tied his hands and made him useless. One thing he would do, he would gain time; Randolph, Roeland, and Jan Krusemann, who held

the land, must be made to understand that Saltichus must be kept waiting for it. Meanwhile could he not take *his* spade, and dig the whole field up—find the treasure, and kneel before Mrs. Lord with it filling his arms, and, like King Cophetua and the beggar-maid, make her his lawful wife? Would she like that? Just then Van der Pyl sang out, calling him to breakfast, and he had to go without answering that weighty question.

That evening, when the sun was low in the heavens, and his work was done, when he had explained to Randolph that Saltichus should be made to wait, had said the same to Roeland, whom he met in the road, and had been to the farm to impress it upon Jan Krusemann, he went irresistibly impelled, as Saltichus and as the diamond cutter had been before him, to the cottage where Jane Lord lived.

She was sitting sewing at the open door; her boy was working in the garden. Guy could not help feeling sad for her, as she gave

him her usual bright trustful smile. Certainly she knew neither of husband dead or treasure buried! Which would she rather have, thought Guy, live husband or dazzling diamonds? And as she talked, he decided in favour of the husband! Unlike the men in the story—for what risks had they not run, and their love was sacrificed always!—just something nobler than them all, was this woman, stitching there!

"Well, Jane!"

"Well, sir! it does me good to see you again! You are quite a stranger here!"

"We are so busy now."

"Yes. The works are getting on finely now, sir. I'm thinking the harbour will be open soon?"

"Next month."

"No! will it now? I wish poor father and my John were here to see the day. Sometimes I think John will come so, sailing in, in

a great big ship, with flags flying, and white sails unfurled."

Guy was silent. He was too honest to deceive her willingly, though Heaven help him! he had often done it till to-day.

"There seems a cloud on your brow to-day, sir! Anything the matter?"

"No, Jane."

"You have perhaps been working too hard, sir."

Guy laughed.

"You need never fear that, Jane!"

A carriage driving up, and who should it be but Mrs. Randolph!

"I do believe she's coming here," said Jane.

"Does she often come?"

"She's been once, sir, since the marriage."

Had Clara come for the same reason as he had; did she want to know how much Saltichus had told Jane, or was she going to be inhumanly generous, and tell her of her

husband's death, and of the wealth that should be hers?

He lifted his hat, and helped her out of the pony-carriage.

"Are you paying Jane a visit, too, Mr. Travers?"

"Yes," said he, colouring uncomfortably.

This woman knew what he did—and more; did it trouble her? was she suffering from any burden? He watched her narrowly.

"Well, Jane, how are you? not dull, I hope. Not giving way to low spirits?"

"No, ma'am, thank you. That's not my way at all; unless anything happens to make me low."

"It is hard not to feel dull sometimes!"

"Ah! not when you've plenty of work. I ain't dull often. I am too thankful generally to be quiet, and for no trouble to come actually upon me."

"No news yet, Jane?" asked Clara.

"No, ma'am. I wait in hopes!"

"Ah, Mrs. Randolph! you should hardly ask that question," for now Guy saw plainly Clara did not mean to tell her, "it reminds her of her sorrow."

"Reminds her, Mr. Travers! I suppose she never forgets . . . I know if I were waiting for George . . . ."

"You would be in a dreadful state, would you not?"

He laughed as he said it, but in truth he was angry at the woman's duplicity.

Clara laughed too, and with just as much insincerity.

"How are you, Mr. Travers?" asked she, turning to him with interest the next moment.

"Very well, Mrs. Randolph."

"What a dreadful thing about the Baroness, wasn't it?"

"Yes. But we must all die some day."

"Yes! But I felt so guilty—so particularly guilty. Lisa was with me——

"Ah! by-the-by—at the diamond cutting!"

It was a revelation to him. What did Mrs. Randolph want there? He looked at her gravely.

"By-the-by, Jane, your friend the diamond cutter——"

"My friend, ma'am?"

"Well, my friend if you like, is very anxious for a place here. What shall we do for him, Jane?" She played with the tassel of her parasol carelessly, as she spoke. "What could he do, do you think?"

"Oh! anything; he is a fine strong man, ma'am. I'll ask Mr. Bailey, the foreman, if you like."

"Ah! do, Jane. Now don't forget."

"I wouldn't interfere, Mrs. Randolph. There's been a great row about that land Saltichus wants, and those things are best

left alone. He'll have to wait ever so long, even if he gets it then."

"I don't know. . . ."

"It is no good trying to help all sorts of people. Satan takes care of his own, you'll find."

"Really, Mr. Travers!" . . . and then Clara knew he was her enemy, and vowed vengeance against him in her heart.

Soon after they left to go their several ways—left Jane to sew and to sing to herself—and Guy wondered in his heart how the victim of all this devilry could be so happy, so innocent of it all, so trustful, while Clara wondered when she was to have some diamonds in her hair, to drive Guy wild with admiration, and make him whisper sweet things in her ear. Busy days followed for Mrs. Randolph, days when she heard now of Roeland's fame, of Roeland's popularity; now of the trouble that the land Saltichus wanted was giving them at the office, for

Krusemann wanted to keep it, Vincent wanted to pocket large sums for it, Randolph and Travers said Saltichus must wait for it, and Roeland said Jan must take the cows away and let the Doctor possess at once.

Many days, too, Clara spent in Amsterdam, going now with her mother, now finding a friend, now being quite alone, but seldom returning without having feasted her eyes on those dangerously tempting diamonds. But she was weary of waiting; she wanted to have, to hold, to own. Was Saltichus ever going to make his promise good? could not Dino help her better? And, contrasting the two natures, was not Dino the more likely to help her? Saltichus had indeed said he loved her, but was he not cold, and terribly strong and ambitious? Dino had never dared say it yet; but then what depths of devotion she had discovered in those gleaming dark eyes. If she had got Saltichus the land, he doubtless would have done some-

thing for her, but now Roeland had put it out of her power. Moreover, there was so much opposition, they were all so slow, Saltichus into the bargain, would he ever find his treasure? Was not Dino swifter, surer? She was in a hundred minds whether she would not tell Dino where the treasure lay—there could not be two buried prizes—and let him step in first!

Clara quite forgot that the diamond cutter had not told her that long story by moonlight just for her especial gratification; it was as his instrument that he used her; he might seem her reverent, devoted, and abject slave, for all that he recognized in her a nature almost as unscrupulous as his own, and doubted not of an object behind her benevolence. Charity so seldom makes women risk reputation; neither, if pity for him and his need brought her alone so frequently to the diamond cutting, would her eyes have dwelt so lovingly on the

stones. He laughed in his sleeve though his black eyes gleamed devotedly all the time.

At length one day she tried him.

"Give me some of these," said she, taking up some small diamonds in her hand as she spoke—he was working then at the blue diamond—"and I will tell you something to help you."

"Ah! lady, yes! and die for it." He drew his fingers swiftly across his throat as he said it; "and never find my treasure, and never give you of those buried ones for your hair. No! lady, you must wait—and so must I!"

He sighed, but Clara caught a look on his face she had not discovered there before. It told her just this much: he could lie, or steal, or risk anything for himself; for her, nothing.

So she would tell him no word now of the spot where his treasure lay. He might go

and dive deep down under the sea if he liked. Saltichus was a truer friend after all! But she did not show Dino she was angry; she might want him yet.

CHAPTER X.

"You know not what Temptation is, nor how
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part."

BROWNING.

THE great work had reached completion; Randolph's harbour was finished. Not finished yet, that is to say, in every minute particular, or in some of the out-lying portions, but finished enough for ships to come and shelter there if they so wished, and for it to be opened.

There was to be a week of rejoicing and festivity; decorations and pennons waved in the breeze, yachts and ships, steamers and

smaller craft, came from all parts of Holland and England, and strangers from The Hague, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam flocked to see the ceremonial.

The King and Queen were to be present on the great day; the night before, a great ball would take place at The Hague, to which Randolph and Clara were especially bidden, and where she was to be presented to the Queen. Preparations went on to the very last, and congratulations and smiles met Randolph wherever he went. He found himself a great man suddenly; no king could have been more fêted than he was.

"Honest labour gets more than it merits sometimes, I see," said he.

He was too modest to remember now all his toil, all his early difficulties. He congratulated Mr. Bradlaw and Mr. Bennett on their success, and they did nothing but clap him on the back and thank him, for even they, too, had awoke and found themselves famous.

What gaiety it was for Franewyk and Ryssenwyk! The joy-bells rang, and the bands of music played, while Mrs. Vincent, in a grand new silk gown, did nothing but talk of—

"My dear son-in-law."

While Clara threw—

"My husband,"

In Lisa's and Roeland's teeth on every occasion.

Respect for the memory of Madame van Hoevenaar kept the doors of Bloemenhof closed; they could do nothing — certainly could not entertain royalty—and those matters were left almost entirely to the English members of the population.

The week began with a holiday and dinner to the workmen. Roeland came to that and made them a speech, praising English work and English hands, that was likely to linger in their hearts for many a long day.

What cheers he got! What deafening applause!

And how they hurrahed for Randolph, when at the end he thanked them for all their toil, for danger run and English homes abandoned, for active co-operation and active obedience. He had never had to complain of insubordination yet, he said.

"Like masters, like men," shouted a voice, and then Travers' name was coupled with Randolph's, and then the building rang again.

Certainly honour and glory fell to George Randolph's share that day, and when his wife's name, too, was called, and the men gave her health and three-times-three, he looked proudly across at her handsome face, and thanked Providence in his heart, without one thought of misgiving, for all the precious mercies and the success that had blessed him.

Clara was standing by Saltichus at the time; he had been talking to her half the

morning. Now she left him, and took up her station at her husband's side. A pang of jealousy crossed the doctor's heart at the action, for he had learnt to love this woman; she had become necessary to him. To have been so long stranded in utter solitude, and then to have found this sister mind, with every quality, every power he most admired, was sore temptation indeed.

The much desired piece of land was to be his very own this week; they could keep it away from him no longer; he was to pay the money down for it, and Jan Krusemann had promised, grumbling much, to take the cows away on the day the harbour was opened. From that day then he was the possessor, real, lawful, undisturbed possessor of his treasure.

Why could he not have got the land one week sooner, alas! that he might have given Clara diamonds for the ball, and have decked her beauty out as he listed. What part did Jane Lord bear in his future plans?

And now listen to this : the man had meant to be honest. Certainly when he came to Holland, he had but vague notions of ever finding the sailor's widow ; however, he would have tried ; he would at least have done his best to fulfil his trust, and have told her of her husband's death. Also, he would have given her *something* of the treasure. Mark, only something. He never meant, even in his best moments, to give her an honest half. He could not do that ! Then, he had become interested in her ; he had once even—that was when he was feeling very sad and dejected, and she was the only being in the place who had been kind to him—vowed to himself that, the treasure once found, he would go to her, confess all, and when sufficient time had elapsed for her to recover from the loss of her husband, ask her to marry him, and honestly share the prize with her.

Jane Lord was not like a common woman ; she had been made somewhat of a favourite

all her life, and had picked up the manners of a class above her own.

After that, prosperity had shone upon Saltichus; he had become more popular, and then he longed more feverishly than ever for the materials for enjoyment, he longed for his treasure. He would get it, and, it possessed—he rich, strong, powerful—he would confront his relations in England, and lord it over them. Would not that be fitting revenge? would not the impoverished father hasten then to recognize his rich son? would it not be heaping coals of fire on his head? He had heard with a sudden and undefinable thrill of pleasure of the freak Fortune had played. What power wealth would now put in his hand! he was glad he had not hitherto preferred his claim; he was glad that the part of Dives was coming to him just now, when his father had no choice but to play Lazarus.

And then, in this state of hungry longing, he had been brought into close contact with

Clara Randolph, who was also suffering herself from the same sort of bitter hunger. Now,—he cared no more at all for Jane Lord, for duty, for honour; all he cared for, was self and Clara.

The diamonds would be his on the Thursday night. The ball was on the Wednesday. Just lately, he had not seen Clara alone; he had not explained this to her. At the ball he could tell her: in the mad excitement of a valse what could he not say to her! He believed now that he had her love; he must make sure!

Meanwhile the festivities for that day came to an end, and Clara went home, having cast a last proud look at the crowded harbour, to make her plans and to arrange about her dress for the great ball at The Hague the next evening.

Pleased smiles followed each other in quick succession on her face, her eyes gleamed and glittered with repressed excitement, and the

life and vivacity she displayed in every movement were as different as light from dark, from the weary indifferent woman of a few weeks ago.

"George," said she, tripping down to him from upstairs, where she had been closeted in close confabulation with her abigail, "I shall have to meet you at The Hague after all to-morrow evening. I must go to Amsterdam in the morning. That tiresome woman has only sent half my dress."

"Very well, dear. We will meet there then. And, Clara—here—buy anything else you like, to make yourself look prettier than you do at this moment, if you can."

He put a note of money in her hand as he spoke.

She kissed him, blushing, and laughed as she turned away again.

"By-the-by, Clara, if that man wants a place, if you like to tell him——"

"What! the diamond cutter?"

"Yes. I have one for him now. One of the men wants to go to England. It's not a hard place, and would be only temporary."

"I am not sure that I shall have time, George!"

"If you have . . . ." said he, immensely relieved to find that she did not care so very much about it: he hardly knew why.

"Yes—if I have!"

"He had better come down to the sea the first day he can."

It had been settled now that the refreshments required on the day of the ceremony were to be given at the Randolphs' house, Roeland's being unavailable. A King and Queen under Clara's roof! Imagine then if she were not in a flutter of expectation, or of nervous tremor!

Clara found time the next day to go to the diamond cutting—they let her pass unchallenged, she might go where she liked, do what she liked. She was the kind lady who was

trying to help that strange fellow Dino! and moreover, she was Mrs. Randolph — this week in Holland she might go anywhere, for Cæsar's wife is above suspicion!

"I have good news for you," said she leaning over the board and looking into Dino's swarthy face. His eyes glistened and so did hers, for was not that the blue diamond close to her finger? He was working at a large water diamond to-day.

The blue one was finished—only put there for—what for?

"For me! for me!" sang her heart. She talked excitedly, wildly, to the man, kept her eyes fixed on his face, let her sleeve fall over the board—then sent him for a pencil and paper on which to write an order for him to present, according to regulation, when he should come to the office.

"And my treasure, lady!" asked he leaning towards her before he went. "Have you heard anything—you seem to me——"

"I know all," said she. In truth she was mad; she did not care who she betrayed just then. "Trust me; and you are a rich man!"

He smiled elated, and unwarily left her there.

A little half moment, and the blue diamond is in her grasp; her handkerchief falls to the floor, and as she picks it up, the diamond is hidden in her mouth. Both hands are empty, she shows that they are so; not a man in the room dreams of the theft.

They let her pass; at the door she leaves a message for Dino; she is hurried, she is going to the great ball at The Hague; she cannot wait longer.

The attendant bows and lets her out.

Straight away, once in her carriage, she drives to the Jews' quarter, to a shop she knows, and there sits, having offered gold,

two weary hours long while the precious gem is arrayed in costly setting.

Randolph's thoughtless present of money was useful indeed: what queen was arrayed like his bride that night? what woman ever looked half so fair?

"Where did you get that? for God's sake, tell me, Clara!"

Was that Dino standing outside in the street! so like his figure. It was the second time she thought she had seen him since the morning. Once at the station, and now again! Oh no! it could not be! They would accuse Dino himself, or the next man to him—she would herself give evidence; they would never think of her. The name of Randolph was so universally respected!

"A kind friend is a good thing to have, isn't it, George?" for she had already arranged a betrayal in her head. "But a kind husband is better! Thanks to you I was

able to get it set for to-night! You told me to make myself look pretty if I could!"

"Tell me more."

"No! no more, insatiable tyrant. Come. It is time!"

She bewildered him with flatteries, with talk, with tales of his triumph, he had no time to say more of the diamond.

Neither of them saw Dino and another man standing by the carriage door, when they got out; neither of them heard Dino say:

"It is there safe in her head. It will be safest there to-night."

With what honour they were received! what adulation and triumphs Clara had to record that night! how gracious were their Majesties! how kind especially was the Queen! like sweet drops of honey the words of congratulation on her husband's success fell into Clara's ear! The attachés vied with

each other to dance with Mrs. Randolph, the statesmen and great men who were interested in their country were all courteous and flattering. The diamond flamed like a beacon star in the room.

The Count van Rosenhagen and his wife, who had met the Randolphs at Bloemenhof, eagerly renewed acquaintance; Clara hoped that they would be present at her house the next day. Saltichus was dazzled and bewildered; at first mad with jealousy, for how had she got that diamond—she must have trafficked with her beauty, she must have some one dearer to her than he was, richer . . . . . or had she been beforehand with him; had she stepped in and found his very treasure? Had he—fool that he was!—told her where it was, just for her to pick it up, and put it in her hair, and madden him with her recklessness and beauty? And then a sort of loathing came over him, as he leaned against the wall, watching her dancing and

talking—for men cannot bear to find in women the greed that they suffer in themselves. It is an anachronism; a woman should be beautiful and innocent, should take what the gods give her, and wear it meekly, but the wisdom of the serpent should be unknown to her.

Clara was half mad as she danced. She began to understand what she had done now; the more homage that fell at her feet for her husband's talent, the more she heard of his worth, his untiring industry, deeper the blush dyed her cheek, and more sharply her deed stung her; another motive was attributed to her emotion; an honest pride, it seemed, in the triumph of the man of her choice.

"What a charming person!" said Society, "and how pretty! how well dressed! They must be rich too."

And to her they said:

"To have been buried in the Meer all this

time! But now you will come oftener, you will let us see you, will you not?"

"Don't they know I have stolen it?" asked she of herself all the time that she smiled in their eyes and met their flattering glances. No Cinderella ever feared the midnight knell, as Clara feared the end of the part she was playing.

And yet she was proud of herself.

When, later, she leaned on Saltichus' arm, and looked up in his eyes, she whispered:

"I have been weak to-day."

But, in truth, she meant she had been strong. Was it not brave with all those eyes upon her to dare to do such a thing? Those swarthy fierce-looking men might have risen in a mass and have taken her in a moment—yet she had done it! was it not a feat to be proud of?—but men hate strength in a woman, so she said falteringly,—

"I have been weak to-day!"

And when he answered in short broken sentences, that told too well of the man's excitement, and of his jealousy, she only said again, more falteringly still :

"Save me!"

He looked down on her pleading face, his own eyes met those large liquid eyes of hers, they rested for a moment on her rounded white arm, on the braids of her glossy black hair, and then, dazzled by the pale lambent gleams of that glistening diamond, he turned them away with a sort of horror—as though a fear or an instinct warned him off.

"What am I to do?" asked he.

There was a hopeless, shipwrecked tone in his voice.

"Take this diamond instead of your blue one, and give me yours in its place."

"Why?"

"It is not mine."

And then she was frightened at the revulsion of feeling that she saw shoot through him.

"Men are so odd," thought she, "not half so brave as we are."

"Won't you speak to me?" asked she presently.

He did not seem able to.

His incarnation of perfection to have done this—to be this—faugh! it was dreadful—horrible—could it be so, really? Had he set his love so high? . . . and was this the woman? . . .

She half shrank away from him.

"Is it true?" asked he at last.

It was more like an entreaty, a drowning man clutching at a hope. He might have heard wrong.

"It would not matter to you," said she, half pettishly, "which diamond you have."

Then their eyes met, but there was no

smile, no look of tenderness on either face.

"I pity you, Clara," said he, with an ill-repressed scorn in his grave voice.

"And is that all?" asked she, impetuously, with a sob.

It was dreadful! To lose him like this—all at once—to see those eyes that had been so tender, so full of life and love for her, turned away. She had liked him more than she knew; if—for when she first began to admire him and his talents, he might have done almost anything with her—if it had not been for those diamonds, he might have saved her, and have made a noble woman of her.

He caught the sob in her voice . . . his mood changed.

Ah! then — she had loved him! For that, and because he had so loved her, he would save her now if he could. Save her because he pitied her; but never love her

more, or see her more. Save her and then forget her; because he was a man and could forgive as well as suffer.

"Change diamonds! yes; as you say, it will cost me nothing. As well one as the other; and then I go, and you will see me no more. You will not try to follow, you will not bring danger upon me?"

"Not follow—never see you again?" She hardly knew why she said it, except that she saw dimly that he was giving her a chance of life, and that she could never be able to show gratitude.

"You must promise," said he.

It was nothing to him; he wanted no gratitude, he wanted no further sight of her.

"I promise."

"Come to-morrow, after midnight, when all is over. Can you come across the field—through——"

"Yes."

"So be it then."

And with a grave bow, he left her side. Her presence was hateful to him now.

But to Clara, life, and sense, and hope had come back. Now she was safe. Now a few lies, a little tact, a little diplomacy, the sacrifice of some one, and she was out of the wood; her triumph complete, her false step unknown.

She danced and laughed the bright hours away, and bewildered her husband with surprise and jealousy, as much as with admiration.

"Now tell me about the diamond?" said he, caressingly, once more in the carriage.

"Doctor Saltichus gave it me," said she. "A wonderful story about a treasure buried by a dead sailor—I will tell you to-morrow."

What to her was his wonderment and blind feeling in the dark? what to her his exclamation about two men who were there

at the door, and whom he had seen twice before to-day?

"Ah!" said she to herself, as she slowly took off her jewels and undid her long black hair, "at last I have lived. How sweet it is!"

CHAPTER XI.

"I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream;
The genius, and the mortal instruments,
Are then in council, and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection."

JULIUS CÆSAR, Act ii.

NEXT morning Clara and her husband started by a very early train to go down to Franewyk; they had to be there in good time, before all the great people should arrive. On first getting up, Clara had felt oppressed and nervous, but by the time she reached the station, she had

shaken it off, and was standing listlessly waiting for George, who had gone to get the tickets, when, to her terror, she saw Dino on the platform, closely attended by another man.

Were they coming to her? would they come and take her now?

Her knees trembled, she thought she must fall; should she scream, or should she try to run away? They were talking about her; there was a peculiar smile on Dino's face, as, for half a moment, he looked her way. Then, to her surprise, they went to her maid, who was standing by the boxes. They questioned her, they took up Clara's dressing-case, they seemed to be testing its strength; they spoke to the woman again as they put it down carefully.

What should she do? would they not take the diamond—take it anywhere away, and leave her in peace. This suspense was terrible! what did they mean to do to her?

why let her run the length of her cord—why not tie her down at once? Could she go to Dino and implore him on her knees by all that she had gone through for him? but then it had been as much for herself, and he must know that now. But he was so handsome, so young—and his black eyes had such depths of tenderness in them—sometimes.

"Oh! he couldn't be so cruel! But, after all, she should swear the diamond was hers. Doctor Saltichus had given it to her—by to-night he would have given it to her. Till then they should find no diamond; she would die first, she would fight over it to the death, she would swallow it. As for that Amsterdam diamond, she had nothing to do with that; how could she? she must remember, above all, that she could know nothing, and could have had nothing to do with it—Dino himself, or some confederate, must have stolen it. All that she had to do then, was

to remember that, and to swear to the diamond she had being her own. After to-night she could show it to them and prove her words, and then Doctor Saltichus might be left to fight over, or die for, or swallow the diamond as he liked best.

Randolph came back with the tickets, and they took their places.

Would Dino and his friend come too, thought she, with averted face and beating heart. No! Dino would not be so familiar. Dino took his seat next door. How lucky it was that George had never seen Dino! How awkward it would have been now!

The sun shone out, and made vistas of light of delicately shaded softness; when it shines, the landscapes always seem to smile with mild content in Holland. As they came in sight of the sea, so smooth and shining, so gaily decked with ships to-day, Randolph's heart swelled within him. His conquered enemy! And how she sparkled and danced

in the sunshine, as though bowing her head gracefully to defeat, and acknowledging herself his victim.

Clara was half asleep in her corner; she was so tired after the last night's ball; he let her rest.

At Franewyk Station all was stir and bustle,—but why, thought Clara, did the people look at her so strangely. Was it admiration? hardly so. She smiled and beamed on all around, but what coldness, what distant respect . . . .

"What is it, George?" asked she.

But he was too busy, giving orders here, shaking hands there, asking for red cloth here, for bunting there, and finally entreating Clara to go home, and not wait for him, to notice anything.

She was too glad to do it, for was not that Dino watching her? and why did her maid seem so frightened? why did the woman answer so shortly—and why did she look so strange?

"Here again?" said a porter to Dino, while Clara was waiting for the luggage.

Dino did not answer.

"You went to The Hague, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And is it all right? The people here can hardly believe it. Poor Mr. Randolph!"

"Oh, yes! it's all right!"

Then Clara knew there had been an alarm raised, and that every one knew. Well! to-morrow they would sing a different song! Dino himself would be called thief, or else Dr. Saltichus. Only let her be free to-day—what did she care for what the people said?

The weary hours of preparation dragged along. Would the time never come? She was in mortal fear; she hardly went from one room to another, without expecting to see Dino. But still he was not there. Why this delay? Was the man preparing an exquisite piece of revenge for himself; was he

waiting till the king himself were there with her under her roof, and then, refinement of sarcasm, king and people alike powerless, was the hand of the law to be laid upon her? That must be it—could she run away, and never see husband, parents, friends again? Run away with the diamond, and live on what it would fetch—Ah! Dino would not let her. He was surely somewhere quite close to her now. Then Jan Krusemann came to the house with some message about the preparations, and brought the news of a great theft that had been committed in Amsterdam the day before.

"What was it, Jan?" asked Clara, looking at the stern old man as he stood facing her in the hall. He had forgotten to take his hat off. The maid was there too, and stared at her mistress' countenance as she spoke: but it was hard set; it told no tales.

"A beautiful diamond, that belonged to a Russian prince!"

"Oh! really? and cannot they find it?"

"There was great confusion, reports, rumours, and messages by telegraph. They came to Franewyk yesterday, too."

"Ah?"

"And have they caught the thief?"

"Dino was at the station this morning. He said it was all right. Vrouw Randolph, my wife wanted to know if she could do anything for you?"

"Nothing," said Clara.

He lingered yet a moment, but that cold pale face betrayed no want, no weakness.

Yet they had all heard it,—and the old man, for Randolph's sake, though he hated deceit and fraud as he hated Satan himself,—yet, for Randolph's sake, he would have tried to help this miserable woman if she had let him.

Then people began to come, the roads were thronged, and Clara's house was soon besieged by the Vincents and others on their way to the harbour. Later, they all went

down; on the road they met Roeland and Guy. And they had heard it too! Clara saw it. The blood rushed into Guy's face as he saw her, while Roeland eyed her with a cold piercing glance. Where was her triumph now?

And yet though she suffered and feared and trembled, she was hardly yet perhaps alive to her danger. Once, in the crowd, when she was on the platform standing by Randolph, who was receiving a great gold cup as proof of the honour they wished to pay him, she felt her dress touched. Looking down, she saw her maid:

"I dared not speak before. Let me take it and throw it into the sea. I promised you should not touch it or take it or do anything with it. I said if you tried to, I'd tell them at once—but—oh! I've known you all your life, and this is too dreadful!"

"Take what! are you mad?"

"Come, listen! what good is it to you? the diamond, I mean—"

"It is mine. You talk folly!"

"Oh! Miss Clara! to have come to this! and I would have saved you—but remember you would not let me!"

Peril just then! Why there was nothing but bright smiles and speeches, fair words and pretty compliments! Peril, sorrow, danger to her—oh! it could not be! She was close to the King, she was making a loyal speech, regretting the absence of the Queen — saying how honoured Franewyk would have been, if she had come—when all at once she met Dino's eyes in the crowd, and she lost countenance, stammered, and voice failed her.

They put it down to shyness, modesty; and the King smiled, and spoke fitting words which made up for the Queen's absence.

Then she looked round for her maid. She would give her the keys of her dressing-case —she would tell the woman to hide it away, throw it away, anything to get rid of it. But

the faithful servant, once repulsed, had gone. Clara could see her nowhere.

How the sands glittered, and the waves sparkled and danced! And her husband's face, too, was joyous and noble! What would she not give for his contentment to-day!

How they all clustered round him, great people from The Hague, statesmen, foreign ministers, attachés, fair ladies—how interested they all seemed in everything! And there was the old group—Guy and Saltichus, Mr. Bradlaw and Mr. Bennett, Heer van der Pyl, Jan, and driving towards them—here comes Adrian. Mr. Vincent is there in the distance. Suddenly, Clara found she was alone; and there contemplating her, about twenty yards off, stood Dino! She shivered and then moving a few steps off, dropped into a seat by her mother.

"That's it. Come along, my fine girl, and be comfortable."

"I did not make the harbour, mother. Don't praise me."

"No! no! but you look bonny enough for a queen; and I hear you turned the heads of all the men at The Hague at the ball last night."

"I daresay."

"'I daresay,' says she, as if it was just nothing to turn a man's head."

At last the signal for the luncheon was given, and Clara started for home. There the duties of receiving fell upon her, and now answering this polite speech, now showing some home treasure, now listening to compliments about the flowers and the decorations, she had no time for nervous fear.

Randolph was radiant: proud of his wife, his house, and above all of his work: grateful for the praise that was heaped upon him, and for the active co-operation and wide sympathy he was receiving. As he said, such a

day made all past toil nothing. He only feared his work was not worthy of such an ovation.

More speeches, more healths drunk, more loyalty, more compliments, and at last Randolph and Clara and Guy stood alone together on the terrace.

"You will stay with us to-night, Guy?" asked George.

Yes; he would. He was ill at ease. Randolph had heard no rumour yet. He might want a friend to be near him soon.

"And so we have had our triumph out," sighed Clara, watching the long lines of shadow made by the setting sun. In the distance they could just see the white line of the ocean; behind the sharp outlines of the sand-hills, the blood-red sky made it seem as though the world beyond were on fire.

In fact, she could hardly believe that the day was done, and that she was not yet disgraced.

"Dear George," said she, with sudden impulse, "are you very happy?"

George smiled at Guy ere he answered.

"Very happy!" echoed he. "That is a sort of gushing expression that I am too wise now-a-days to indulge in; but if you mean am I very glad it is all over? yes; I am."

"But you are satisfied, George?" asked Guy.

"My dear fellow, of course I am satisfied with what everyone has said and done for me, and with their magnificent gold cup. I think, if you ask me, they have made a great deal too much of me. They have made such a fuss, I might reasonably begin to consider myself the biggest and the cleverest man in Holland."

"But you must be proud?" said Clara.

"So I am; very proud. But I am not sure that they have not tried to make a fool of me. I have done nothing. Work was offered me, and I did it. What honest man

would not be thankful for work, if he wants wealth? I hope all this ovation does not mean that it is such a rare distinction to be honest?"

Guy laughed—till a glance at Clara's face checked him.

"Dear modest old George," said she.

"By-the-by, Clara, tell us about the diamond now. It will amuse Guy."

"Let us have chairs outside then," said she.

And, once established there, in low soft modulations she told Saltichus's tale. The sun set, and the short twilight deepened into night, and there they sat listening to her. The same tale that Guy had heard told to her; with some garnishing, much word-painting added, with many omissions, too, such as who the dead sailor was who had buried the treasure, and where the treasure exactly was buried.

"Is that all?" asked Guy.

"All——I think," she added, musing.

"Then that explains about the land he wanted to buy."

"How?" asked Randolph.

"Naturally," said Guy, as if it had just occurred to him, instead of his having thought over it deeply, "if the land on which the treasure were buried were not in his actual possession, some legal impediment might arise."

"That is a very curious story about reclaimed land," said George. "It would do for a novel. I suppose, then, that is why you only *just* got the diamond yesterday, Clara?"

"Exactly," said she.

"I wish you had not taken it. It is only a loan, however, I suppose, of course."

She was silent for a moment, for she had not thought of that. Then she answered, running all her words one into the other:

"Of course. But now do remember, both

of you, that this is all a profound secret, till he tells you. Remember, Mr. Travers."

"Now I see why you wanted the field for him, Clara," said her husband, interrupting Guy's answer.

The shadow had come between them once more.

CHAPTER XII.

"Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
Be happy! Add but the other grace,
Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
I knew you once: but in Paradise,
If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face."

ROBERT BROWNING.

THE house was closed, and everyone in it was wrapped in slumber, save Clara, who lightly rose, and passing into her little dressing-room slipped down to the hall. She carried a lighted candle in her hand, and a miserable picture of guilt she looked; fearful of every footfall, pale and wretched, trembling with cold and fright, her

eyes seemed starting out of her head, and her long black hair thrown carelessly back, made her look weird and unearthly. Once in the drawing-room, she closed the door after her, and sat down to think; Guy was sleeping overhead. Would he hear if she opened the shutters? The hall-door she dared not attempt. Well; something must be risked. She got up and opened them as noiselessly as possible.

Guy, however, heard, and starting up quickly, dressed himself. That some devilry was afloat, he never doubted. He stationed himself at his window and waited.

The night was cloudy; there was not much light. Every now and then the moon peered out, to be swiftly obscured again, and making the sudden darkness felt with greater intensity.

Yet Clara was thankful for the moving veil of cloud; without it, how could she dare to cross the meadow in the silvery gleams of

the pure moonlight, bent, as she was, on the execution of her foul errand?

Discovery of her presence there would be ruin! Clara stood at the open window, waiting. Would Saltichus come and meet her—was it time to go yet? should she go at all? Yes! yes! yes! she was bound to go. Hope, honour—everything counselled it. Certainly she must go. It was the only chance of escape she had.

What a still night it was! A faint rustling in the trees, the distant bark of a dog, the horses moving in the stable, the cattle lowing at Jan Krusemann's farm, every now and then cries of wild birds—and her own breath. All at once, a new sound broke on the stillness. The sound of a pickaxe striking with even fall in the field below.

Clara shuddered. Saltichus digging for the dead sailor's treasure. Only now seeking it . . . . had he then feared so much to be detected? had the news of the robbery in

Amsterdam alarmed him so that he dreaded being found with a blue diamond in his possession?

One, two, three—the strokes fell. A dull heavy thud; would the stubborn earth never give up its treasure? When now and again they ceased, the intense silence was maddening.

The night wind sighed in the trees; the moon came out with a shivering start from behind a cloud, showing the gaunt form of the old lightning-struck beech with ghostly distinctness; the distant moan of the sea sounded like a long low wail; the dead strokes of the falling axe were so many death knells in Clara's ear, and she knelt in a sort of over-wrought agony of terror by the window, with hands clasped and lips that tried to pray, but never dared to frame a word.

And then they ceased altogether: those dead, heavy strokes. Clara listened to make

sure, and then she knew there would be no more. Now she must brace herself up and go. Now she must meet this man, and see if he would save her.

The diamond that she was to exchange was tied round her neck: it was hidden beneath her dress. She felt for it once again, then wrapped her shawl around her, and stepped out.

A stealthy step on the gravel, a man's figure starting from the shadow of the house, and a heavy hand on her arm.

She neither screamed or attempted to move. The thought of her husband still sleeping within was more powerful than the fear.

Saltichus or one of them—what mattered it?

"Ah! Dino?" exclaimed she, under her breath.

He held her savagely.

"Don't! you hurt me. I will not run away. What is it?"

But if George was asleep, Guy was not. A spectator of the scene from above, he gave the alarm at once. He knew nothing of the diamond cutter; he thought it was Saltichus.

"Get up, George! get up!" shouted he, opening his door. "Follow me down."

"Ah!" exclaimed Clara, terrified. "They have heard you. Come; come."

She tried to pull Dino after her.

"No! no! my lady; no! no! no more freedom."

"But if you come too, what does it matter? Come—run."

Her energy surprised him.

"Did I not promise to show you your treasure, and you stop me just when success is ours? Come, then."

The man wavered, and let go his hold.

"Who is that?" asked she, for she saw another figure. "Make him come too."

Saltichus and Saltichus' diamond must be

reached at any price. She ran with lightning speed till the trees afforded them more shadow. Guy followed.

A strange sight met their eyes. The fitful moonlight showed a man, with bare arms, kneeling on the grass, pulling at some heavy weight. The next moment all was dark. A black cloud obscured the moon's face.

But Clara never stopped: she went heedlessly, recklessly on. Dino followed on her trail as near as he could.

"The diamond! the diamond!" hissed she.

When the moon shone out again, Clara was leaning heavily on Saltichus' shoulder, eying greedily the dark depths he had dug—he was looking up at her, half-scornful, half terror-struck. Dino and his companion, were close at hand. A few paces off Guy came running—and last, George Randolph, the woman's husband, appeared.

A strange scene.

"You promised not to betray me!" said Saltichus in a hoarse voice.

"Save me!" cried she—like a hunted animal.

And then he forgot himself, remembered her sin and her danger. After all, *he* was safe—the master of the occasion, lawful owner of treasure trove—directed thereto by a dead man.

"What do you all want?" asked he, rising.

The moon shone on his excited face, and powerful frame. Oh! surely he could protect her.

Dino advanced again to Clara, and stretched out his arm.

"Stand back!" said Saltichus.

"What do you want?" asked Clara.

"I want everything!" said Dino furiously, looking greedily into the dark hole at their feet. "It is mine!"

Saltichus laughed hoarsely.

"But first that blue diamond that was stolen yesterday."

There was a long silence: every one looked at Clara. Randolph made a movement, and then his arm fell powerless, and he waited breathlessly for his wife's voice.

It came clear as a bell.

"I know not what you mean. Doctor Saltichus gave me my blue diamond."

"Do you hear that?" laughed Dino to his friend.

"I gave Mrs. Randolph that blue diamond," said Saltichus.

Then he signed to Clara that the chest was not open yet—and that they were lost.

"Explain," said a chorus of voices.

"It is cold here. Come into the house."

"Agreed," said Dino's friend.

"I must take this," said Saltichus.

Guy stooped to help him.

"Hold! Mr. Travers. Think a moment first, before you share my burden. Do you know who I am?"

"Know?" thundered Guy—remembering only Randolph, Mrs. Lord, the dead sailor and all these people Saltichus was injuring—"Know, oh yes! I know! You are a reckless adventurer and a nameless villain. You have defrauded an honest woman of her right, and for the sake of your own pitiable selfishness and a pitiable ambition you have wittingly ignored a death-bed trust. You are a wretch—unworthy the name of a man!"

"And yet," rejoined the other, "there is something that you did not know. I am a man—more than that, I am your brother! Child of the same father, your elder by some few years, and heir to your home."

Guy lowered his head. What could he say? how find a word more that sounded not a rebuke against his father?

"Prove it, sir. Prove your words!" cried Randolph.

"Certainly. I'll show you a copy of the marriage register in my house."

Guy had been standing with him over the chest; now he slunk away, shame and confusion in his attitude.

So Dino the diamond-cutter stepped forward, and Saltichus silently put a pickaxe into his hand as he pointed to the hole he had already dug.

A hoarse laugh from Dino explained his astonishment.

"An accomplice?" asked Guy.

"The earth is not yet sufficiently loose below," said Saltichus. "I cannot get it yet."

Dino swore an oath; then looking round savagely, as a dog might who sees a bone to be reached if only he can stay to work it out, he signed to his mysterious companion to stand by Clara, and he fell to with a will.

The others stood by, amazed and won

dering at seeing these two men working together at such a time, in such a scene, as though one object bound their lives together.

At last the soil gave way; the close walls of earth fell in and they pulled out the chest.

Both gave something like a triumphant shout as they hauled it up beside them, and each stared at the other questioning the triumph his adversary felt.

But it was not time yet for explanation.

Only each man knew that it would be a fight for the dear life, and that the man opposite, who had but now been working with him, was his deadliest foe under heaven.

And meanwhile, Clara Randolph, watching, too, and with every nerve wound up to the intensest pitch of excitement, seeing all eyes straining down into those dark depths of Mother Earth, almost wondering at the men

for thinking only of the treasure, while her tale had still to be told—waited for her opportunity.

Who now would believe in the stolen diamond having ever belonged to Saltichus? Who could believe it? Not even the most ingenious lie ever invented could account for a diamond that had been but yesterday flaming on her brow, now lying buried in the bowels in the earth, and only now rescued thence by the united efforts of two desperate men? Dino had come just one hour too soon, after all. No; that hope was gone. But one thing was left to her—flight!

"Surely now that great black cloud will hide the moon's face soon! surely—now they all forget me! peering down, deep down there! Surely then, this man, who even now almost touches me, yet now turns away again to see the chest. . . ."

Yes; the black cloud had sailed across now. The blue sky and the bright moon

were hidden away, and Clara, swiftly turning, had begun her flight.

On, on, with heart wildly beating, and feet that threatened to fail her in her fear; the end of the meadow is almost gained, the edge of the shrubbery is almost reached, when an angry yell behind her told her she was missed, and the faithless black cloud, sailing away in its careless course, showed her flying form to her enemies.

Swift steps behind her; only time to throw herself on the ground in the dark shadow of a juniper tree. In vain! he is upon her. The moon is shining too brightly now for her to hope for concealment.

It was the police officer who caught her this time. The others had not moved in pursuit of her.

"Neatly done, my lady," said the man. "You put me off my guard, standing so quiet there. I did not know it was in you."

She looked up at him in sullen silence.

"You must come with me," said he, more kindly.

"Won't you save me?" said she, suddenly rising, and speaking with the soft voice that she was apt to adopt on occasions.

She guessed that it would be a new experience for such as he was.

"If I were a man, I would have saved myself," she went on; "but I am only a weak woman; so helpless, and at your mercy."

For a moment he stood looking at her grand beauty.

Then she forgot herself and the part she was playing. She stamped her foot, and tried once more to escape. She had misunderstood his hesitation, and now he was reminded of his duty.

"No, no; not this time, my lady. No more words—and come with me."

He tried to lead her off.

"I will walk beside you," said she.

Without exchanging another word, they

crossed the field again, and stationed themselves near the rest, waiting.

And now the chest was there on the grass, and Dino and Saltichus began to carry the burden between them. Saltichus was still confident, still triumphant; he knew he might have to fight the stranger who had been working with him; he thought possibly he might put forward some wild unprecedented claim—for who would not struggle for such a prize? But as to his own indisputable right, what doubt could there be?

Travers saw Randolph quiver, when Clara, closely guarded like a prisoner, prepared to follow towards the house, and he linked his arm within his friend's, in token of sympathy, as they walked together.

Inside the house, they found everything in confusion; packing-cases and boxes, books piled together, furniture pushed into corners. Everything spoke of departure.

There was a lamp burning in the room.

As its light fell on their faces, they observed each other with a sort of curiosity. Only Randolph did not look at Clara; as yet, he did not dare. He kept his eyes averted, till knowledge of the truth, salvation or death, had come to him.

They had walked in silence, and, meanwhile, Clara had made a plan. If the chest were not open, Saltichus could not save her; no one would believe, and there would be no possibility of effecting the exchange. Dino himself must save her.

Saltichus and Dino set down the chest on the table, and Saltichus turned away to trim the lamp.

"I brought you to your treasure just in time, Dino. Save me!"

Clara's whispered words fell into his ear as she stood beside him.

But it was not her turn yet, nor, save Randolph, were any of them thinking of her exclusively just then.

"If you are my brother," said Travers slowly, looking across at Saltichus, "why have you not said so before?"

"I waited for this!" and he laid his hand on the iron case.

"To bring us a heavier burden of disgrace?"

"To be wealthy and independent when I came to claim relationship, to want nothing, and to be such that you would all gladly own my right to the name of Travers!"

But Guy was not the only one who was to be surprised that night. Dino stepped forward.

"Your name is nothing to me, your face I have never seen before—but the treasure is not yours, it is mine!"

Saltichus laughed.

"Ha! ha! my friend, very clever. But what proof have you! There was an owner, I allow, but he is dead!"

"He is not dead," said Dino. "I am he!"

"Prove it."

Then Dino drew forth from his finger a little misshapen gold ring, beaten out of a nugget of rough gold.

A flash of light, a report, what was that? a clearing of smoke, and then .... Saltichus standing there, and looking eagerly across at Dino with a pistol in his hand, and Dino standing—fierce, unhurt.

An oath from Saltichus, and then, before he was aware, before any of them knew, Dino had sprung at his throat, and they were wrestling in deadly conflict.

It was but for an instant. Travers tried to come between.

"It is over," said Dino.

He had wrested the pistol from Saltichus, and was calm and confident once more.

The other barrel was loaded. He pointed it defiantly at the doctor's breast.

"Interfere if you dare!"

Saltichus paled, and fell back on a chair—covering his face with his hands.

"Open the case," said Dino.

They gave him instruments—and Guy helped him. Their strokes fell fast in the silence of the room. Their restrained excitement became intense.

At last it was open, and Dino's eyes laughed and glittered again as he saw once more the dearly loved prizes he had amassed a long time ago. There was the lost blue diamond—and there were pale green and yellow and water beauties—there were rough nuggets, and there were pearls and corals. In a corner, by itself, lay a little plain misshapen ring! He held it up, and showed it to them all.

They fell back.

The treasure was his.

Quick as lightning, Saltichus made a dart for the diamond—in vain—and at the same instant, the pistol gleamed in

Dino's hand, and was pointed at his head.

"Do you dispute my right?"

"I do not."

He bowed his head and stepped back; his spirit seemed broken, as the hope he had cherished so long faded from him.

"I like you better so, for a brother, Saltichus;" said Travers. "The other would have broken my father's heart."

Saltichus looked at him, not understanding.

"Now you'll come—if it's true—and your hands will be clean, at least, though it be thanks to no merit of yours if they are."

"Then thanks to whom is it?" asked Dino triumphantly.

Half an hour ago they had all feared, had at least respected, this Saltichus! Now—how they despised him! He cowered there, hopeless and ashamed—seemingly utterly broken-down and spiritless.

Then suddenly, in the silence, the man who was beside Clara rose, and signed to Dino, as he laid his hand on her shoulder—

"Let us be going!"

She shook it off roughly.

"Why! what do you want with me?"

Oh! why did Randolph and Guy and Saltichus turn away their heads like that? would no one speak to her? would no one help her? She met Dino's eyes then, and with sudden impulse she rose: threw back her loose black hair; and in the action the shawl she had wrapped around her half fell from her shoulders, and her fair white throat was exposed to view. She leaned on the table, and said aloud, with sudden, clear, sharp-cutting tones:

"Well! I do not care! I will confess. I did it:" and then they all looked at her. But she hardly saw their eyes, or noticed their concentrated glances. Fast talking, excited, beautiful, imperious—there she stood and

spoke—at first more as a queen, than as a criminal; later, more as a fair woman, deeply wronged, than a creature without reason or right to guide her.

"I did it. But did you not all tempt me? Did you not all dare me do it in so many words? Lisa with her parade of wealth and dazzling gems, Roeland with his scorn, George with his dissatisfied moans for wealth and freedom, and you, Doctor Saltichus, with your fair promises? Oh! why did you talk of them, if you never meant to give them to me? why madden me with telling me of your diamonds, and what they would do for me? why lead me on and on and on, to dash me down to depend on myself—my poor weak helpless self—at last? And you, Dino,"—and here she turned in her long sweeping robe, with a regal movement, and half-contemptuous, half sarcastic, pleading—"why did you, too, promise bribe on bribe—why tell me tales of beautiful diamonds—why spread them there

in glittering dazzling splendour before my weary hungry eyes—why lead me to think you were my friend—why feed my imagination with all you would do, and then pursue me thus? Pursue me to cast me into a common prison, pursue me, though I had worked and toiled for your gain—though I had risked character and fair name and husband's love to hear your tale—though now at the last—true throughout to you—I have brought you to your prize—yet—there you stand, my deadliest enemy!"

He moved forward—watching her. He would have spoken, an intense excitement prevented him.

"Pity with me once awaked, is never forgotten. Your tale moved me. To have won so much, and then to have lost! To have toiled so long, and to have nothing at the end! To have been a true friend, and to have been betrayed! I vowed you should find your treasure, that you should conquer.

And then you promised me diamonds, glittering gems! You put another soul into me! You made me long feverishly for . . . . . stones! Before, I had never thought of them! I dreamed of them now by night and by day. I went mad. I thought of nothing else. But you withheld them still—and impatient, longing, feverish, mad—you put a great blue diamond—as large as Lisa's—before me—and—I took it."

She was silent, and looked around at them all like some poor proud hunted stag that knows he is doomed, but will not consent to die yet.

Randolph buried his face in his hands—leaning forward on the table.

The rest all looked at her—with eyes riveted, fascinated.

"Save me, Dino!"

The voice was pleading, but the proud neck was curved, and the head was high—as

though it were a duty enforced, a command given—not an entreaty murmured.

"Give me the diamond."

She tore the ribbon from her throat and gave it him.

"I will save you," he said. "Go—but escape. You must not be found; go, and alone—go, woman—and never say Dino was ungrateful."

One look at George—one look for mercy, and then she went.

Randolph rose to follow—but Dino's pistol point was at his breast. The officer rose angrily—

"Stand—she is safe! I choose it! Stay—or I shoot! Hush! am I not rich now?" and he pointed to the case—"cannot I do as I choose?"

Only the cold night wind blew in at the door by which Clara Randolph had passed out into the darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

"'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own;
Yet think of my friend and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!"

ROBERT BROWNING.

A STRANGE scene followed. A conflict of passions, of ill-restrained anger, of scarce-disguised desires. A love shattered, a dream of wealth dispelled as soon as realized—a brother found—a lost possession recovered!

Dino first regained composure. It is easy for a conqueror, with whom things are going well, to be calm. Clara Randolph gone, he looked round with triumph. He had ceded

to a noble feeling—the first he had felt for long—in saving her; and he was better for his victory. Whether she had really thought only of him in bringing him to Saltichus, he knew not; anyhow, she had shown him his long-lost treasure, and he was grateful.

Nevertheless he did not loose hold of his pistol; he looked warily round, ready to spring on the first suspicion of attack. What was he against so many? and was not such a prize worth the most reckless attempt?

But Randolph and Travers were too occupied just then with thoughts of other things to care much for the treasure; only Saltichus stood glowering there, like a foiled hunter, who has toiled for his prey for many weary hours, and sees it eluding him at the last. After such sacrifices, such risks—this! After such weary waiting, such calculation, to find the prize—and to be just in time to put it into the hands of another man—a man with whom he cannot dispute it! And this all

through a woman! In truth, to succeed in any enterprise in this world, one must be superhumanly strong.

These his thoughts, and then the diamond cutter began to speak.

He told them with a smile of self-congratulation on his face, his story,—right from the very beginning, as he had first told Clara, up to the angry feelings at the moment when she brought him to his treasure and he saw Saltichus kneeling over it.

And then Saltichus told his tale.

To both, the rest listened with breathless attention; and then questions followed, eager, swift, in a torrent.

The display of human rectitude, of ideal justice when self interferes, of principle, of the comparative strengths of honesty and avarice, was hardly edifying.

It was curious for these two men, who had brooded over this buried treasure, while half a world lay betwixt them, brooded over it so

long in deep silence, with bitter feelings of revenge, and with restless dreams of avarice to be satisfied—now to have their tongues loosened, and to hear themselves speak of it as though it was some other aim, some common scheme, some hope now fulfilled, and completed—or some dream, now faded, and the fair fruit lost!

"Why did you not charge my wife with possession of the diamond before?" asked Randolph.

"She had been kind to me. I told you she listened to me in the moonlight for an hour once. I would not disgrace her before the king."

What did it matter, a few minutes sooner or latter? How lessen now the bitterness or the sarcasm of his past triumph?

"Did you only begin to seek—to dig, I mean—for the treasure to-night, Saltichus?" asked Guy, unable as yet to recognize the man in public as a Travers.

"No. I made sure of the exact place of concealment before this, and lately I have worked at night. At times I have doubted it being there: it was buried so deep. To-day, as soon as the land was my own, I began. I was hours working.—But I am strong."

Dino got up, and signing to the officer, to whom he had given the diamond, to help him, he prepared for departure with his iron case.

And yet what real right had he to it? Simultaneously, the same thought occurred to Saltichus, Travers, and to Randolph. What legal right had he to it? Should not they knowing the tale, take steps to acquaint the Borneo merchants of the treasure trove, and help them to recover these ill-gotten gains?

Something of this, Dino read in their faces. The pistol gleamed in his hand, and laughing carelessly he said:

"In company with an agent of the law, I cannot leave you more respectably shielded.

Who ever takes a step forward to interfere —he is a dead man!"

John Lord had not mistaken Dino, when he said he was desperate!

Saltichus did not love his life very dearly, but to lose it like this, and get nothing in exchange, was madness. They let him go. The police officer would keep him in sight. They would confront him again! it was but a postponement of satisfaction to justice.

And then the others parted; Travers and Saltichus with an agreement to meet again later in the day; they had affairs to settle—he would come to the office, he said—and Randolph to recover from the terrible blow he had suffered as best he might.

As for Saltichus, Travers was half doubtful whether he should see him again, whether he would come to him, whether he would not now carry out that plan of flight that he had seemingly arranged,—for he confessed, the

diamonds found, he had meant to leave Holland that night.

The man seemed so utterly hopeless, so unstrung, so unlike himself; would he have the spirit now to prefer any claim? would he not rather go back to that nameless chaos where he was before, and strive no more to raise his head from the dark depths where circumstance and his own fatal disposition had cast him?

A few hours later, Jane Lord, basking in the rich morning sunshine at her cottage door, saw Saltichus coming towards her.

She stopped her sewing, and watching the bright gleams that bathed the sea, the flowers in her cottage and the little trim garden in glittering light, waited in some wonder at his visit.

Rumours had reached her of diamonds stolen, of diamonds found, of Clara Randolph, of Saltichus himself; but it was vague, ill-defined: improbable and horrible. She

had even heard that Saltichus had been nearly taken up, but had escaped.

"So you are not gone, sir?"

She smiled as she said it, as if she had not doubted him, although she had heard so much against him: but now it would be made clear.

"I came to you first, Jane. I have something to say to you."

In truth, her trust wounded him.

"Will you come inside?"

She shut the door after him, and stood there, waiting by the window, while the full sunlight made an aureole round her head, and the background of flowers made a wall, as it seemed, of smiles and contentment, wherewith to shut out misery and despair for ever.

Why should he disturb this peace? Why tell her of her husband's death—of his own baseness? Better go away, and never see her more. And yet—if the diamonds

had been his . . . . and if he had come to her then—well ; let him just try her.

"Jane, a long time ago a trust was given to me . . ."

"Yes, sir," said she, glibly, determined to listen and understand swiftly.

"A trust, telling me of a certain treasure I should find, and share it with another person."

"Yes, sir." This was so much Hebrew to her. "Why were you to have it, sir, or the other person ?"

"It was her right, as his wife."

She looked at him intently without speaking.

"I found the treasure, Jane. I come to you—to tell——I could not come before—I——"

The colour left her face. She clutched the table for support.

"And he, sir, John ?"

"He told me of it. He said you and I were to sha——"

"But he, sir, John; where is he?"

"I could not tell you of the one till I could the other."

"But he, sir, John; where is he?"

"He is dead, Jane."

The sun shone on, and the flowers smiled, and beyond, the waves caught up the light and danced and rollicked with it in gamesome play; but Jane stood there, silent, pale, horror-struck, and Saltichus, scarcely daring to look at her in her grief, stood, with eyes lowered, in the shadow.

"And after all, it was not *his* treasure, Jane," said he at last.

"Treasure, man! what is money to me?"

Her whole nature surged up in a wail of piteous indignation against this knowledge that was coming to her, now, so late.

Then, suddenly turning, with contempt and eager thirst for news on her face at once:

"How long have you known it?"

"Ever since I have known you."

"Ah! that explains your mysteries, and your questions, and your—Oh, God! it is too hard. And the world goes on the same, and I have been waiting and hoping and praying all these years for nothing."

"But the treasure, Jane; it is being taken from us—from you and from me. Will you help me to get it back?"

"You said it wasn't his just now. How can it be your's or mine then? Oh! my man—my man;" and the tears welled out on her cheeks, while she knelt, bowing her head in the sunlight, and sobbing bitterly.

Then she turned upon him quickly, suddenly, savagely.

"Why have you done this? Why have you misled me? why—I don't believe it. He is not dead; where is his sign?"

A dirty crumpled little bit of paper came out of his pocket.

"Ah!" she tore it from him.

"I see; it is true," said she, in another moment, and she heaved a great sigh as she looked away across the sea where she had looked, hoping, so long.

"Forgive me, Jane."

"Never. Never. Never. I did not deserve this."

"I know——"

Just then the door was furtively opened, and Dino's head appeared:

"Are you alone? may I come in?"

"Come in."

Saltichus instinctively shrank back, and stood behind the door of the inner kitchen. Dino, who was occupied in carefully shutting the outer door, never noticed him.

"I am going away from Holland," said Dino to Jane Lord. "Will you come too?"

An angry flush of colour dyed her face.

"I mean this. You know, now——"

"Yes; I know."

"Oh; then he has told you?"

She bowed her head.

"John Lord was my bitterest enemy. You know now what I meant that first day I saw you. I was astonished. I did not understand. I see now. And you have been wronged with the rest of us."

"No."

"Yes; but the treasure. You must have expected some of it. I am sorry; I pity you. You have been kind to me. You are beautiful. Will you come with me now?"

She shrank away from him.

"But I am rich. You do not understand," insisted he. "Oh! come with me."

Then he brought some jewels out of a paper, and showed them to her. To an unpractised eye they did not tell much, for they were not set or polished.

"And you would be rich—oh! ever so rich. Richer than Madame van Francken-

burg, richer than half the grand people you have ever seen. You must come. I have risked much to come to you. To-night I go and leave Holland for ever. Oh! come to my beautiful islands; there the sun always shines like that," and he pointed to the dazzling waves as he spoke, "and everyone is always happy."

"Hush!" said Jane, a sorry smile coming through her tears. "You do not know. My head is full now of other things—my poor dead John, goodbye. Dino, you meant it kind, I daresay, but it's an odd sort of thing to say to an Englishwoman."

Saltichus looked on, wondering at her indifference.

"Then you will not be rich?" questioned Dino.

"Dino, shall I tell you?" said she. "I should like to die. I am so wretched. As for being rich, gains so got bring nothing but misery with them. Have a care. I

heard about the treasure. I think a curse was in the ground along with it."

Then she opened the door, and with a dignity that would not be gainsaid, waited for him to pass out.

He obeyed, and went.

"You will not be rich, Jane?"

It was Saltichus, who re-appeared from the inner room.

"I forgot you were there. I fancy you will be leaving Holland, too?"

There was effrontery and contempt in her voice.

"Yes; goodbye, Jane. My sins to you are scarlet, I know. If it is any consolation to you, remember that in you I found the first honest woman I have seen; one who preferred honour and rectitude and a clear conscience to wealth, and everything that women most like."

"Yes; a woman who can do everything a woman should do, except forgive."

"Hullo, Saltichus! you are here! I was giving you up at the office, and thought I would come and meet you."

It was Guy Travers.

Jane sighed for very weariness of visitors, and walked away from the door, leaving the doctor now, and too gladly, in Guy's hands.

A swift glance at her face showed him that revelations had been made.

"My poor Jane!" said he: "but you are not the only sufferer."

"I know, sir."

"And," he went on, "that fellow, the diamond cutter, has got off scot-free with his treasure. The police have been after him, but he bribed and corrupted the man who was with him, who, after returning the diamond by other hands, has given up the service, and has gone, I suppose, off to South America or to Siberia with him."

"Indeed, sir."

She looked at Saltichus. She did not want

to betray Dino, for some undefinable reason; probably because he had, as she thought, meant kindly by her; and women never forget to be grateful.

"Yes; off to the Helder straight; and gone, I fear, for ever."

"If more could go the same way, sir, it would be better for some of us."

They were all silent.

"To think, Mr. Travers," said she, pointing at Saltichus, "how he could come here time after time, sitting by the hour, listening and talking, asking about John, about home, and about England, telling me of America, telling me there was a good time coming, telling me I should see John again. Why, sir, he told me so, the very first day I saw him——"

"I remember it," said Guy.

"And then, sir, he knew he was dead. Oh! it has been too hard—more than one can bear." A convulsive sob escaped her.

"And now we see it all—all his mysteries, all his tales—now we know what he meant, 'he came to Holland to find his treasure!' now we understand."

"Ah!" said Guy, remembering the expression.

"Mrs. Lord—Jane—I cannot bear this!" said Saltichus impetuously; "'my punishment is greater than I can bear!' Do not hate me, Oh! so bitterly. I deserve it all—and I have nothing to say for myself. But if you had suffered as I have, if you had been exiled from home and land as I have, if you had been insulted and your best feelings crushed by a father—if you had struggled hopelessly for years, and suddenly saw life, wealth, success, revenge, before you—say! would not you have been tempted too?"

Jane Lord did not speak. His earnestness frightened her.

"Did you bring the paper you spoke of?" asked Guy, quietly.

Saltichus produced a folded paper.

"It is a copy."

Yes; a copy of the marriage register of a ceremony performed in the year 1828, in London, at an East End church, between Hubert Travers, Esq., of Charlton Park, in Lincolnshire, and one Geraldine Lee, of New York.

It was apparently true enough. Guy shivered slightly. There was no escape.

"The correctness of this can easily be ascertained," said he. "I will write home and to London to-day. It will be placed in the lawyer's hands; and if, as you say, your claim is just, my father will be the first, I know, in the performance of his duty towards you."

Saltichus smiled sarcastically.

"You will prefer now, I suppose, to put forward your claim at once?"

"Certainly. It is my only revenge for past humiliations."

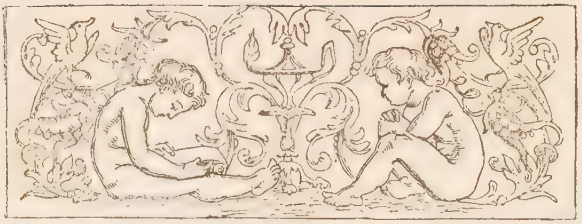
"Brought on you, let me say, by yourself. For years my father sought you; wishing to make any reparation for fancied wrong."

"Fancied wrong!" he burst out. "No! I have suffered too much. I will bear it no longer. It was her wrongs—when your father tired of her, and hated me in consequence—that made my young blood boil, and drove me away. But now, weary, disappointed, unsuccessful—I thirst for home, for money, for a name. I will be one of you again."

"So be it!" said Guy. "Go to them. They will take you in and acknowledge you son. And know, that the bitterest drop in all this to me, is not at finding you brother, but that you claim the name of Travers and drag it down through such depths of mire. A fitting revenge, indeed. It wanted but this to break my father's heart. Yet, never mind, you have soiled the name and be-

spattered it, indeed, in Holland. Go. I stay here to clear it."

Just then Randolph passed the window, looking pale and excited. His eyes were haggard, and his whole appearance spoke of misery and despair. Guy rushed after him. Was not his condition much more pitiable than his own?



CHAPTER XIV.

"Or, like pale ghosts that darkling roam,
Hovering around their ancient home,
But find no refuge there!"

KEBLE.

THE cold night wind blew round Clara and lifted her shawl, as, half dazed, she stood for a moment on the door-step of Saltichus' house, saved by Dino's desperate threat.

Saved! Was she saved?

She tried to gather her thoughts together, and shivered and shivered again in the cold darkness, after being in the warm, crowded room.

And then suddenly she began to run, in a sort of panic lest she should be pursued and caught. And yet she knew not where to go. Dino's words that she must not be found rang in her ears.

How long was that weary time ago when she had longed to be able to run away? Now, she almost wished she were a prisoner, able to make no effort, only able to sit down and moan. Now, she dared not stop, and yet she knew not whither to go. Might she not give herself up? it would be such rest! But she had no diamond now—it would be such folly! and the disgrace on Randolph!—Ah! now, at last, stranded out there in the darkness, her heart bled for him more than for herself. She suffered poignantly—and callous now for her own self, seemingly lost as far as she was concerned—she pitied him! To have risen so high, and then to be dashed down thus; and by her whom he had loved so dearly! Oh! bitter humiliation! Oh!

degradation beyond all others! No; she would not give herself up. She would suffer on, and drink the cup she had given herself right to the very dregs. And she would be lost! She would never see any of them any more! She had fallen, and there she would lie in her misery, by herself. The last vestige of her pride was speaking in her heart thus. They would suffer, too; perhaps they would stretch out their arms towards her, impelled by some mistaken idea of mercy, imploring her to break the terrible silence; but she would never answer. They would suffer less, she thought, if she were really lost, and they relieved of her loathsome presence.

Thus surged the burning thoughts through her mind as she wandered hither and thither. There through the trees, for unconsciously she had returned on her steps, gleamed the light of the lamp from the room where her husband and the rest were; and there, in the

distance, loomed the home from which she was henceforward banished.

Through the struggling dawn she saw it, becoming clearer every moment; and then for the first time she began to understand what it was to be a wanderer, without anchor of home or heart where one may rest and be at peace.

A wanderer, shunned by all, shunning all; a nameless one, a homeless one, a hopeless one. Once she had sighed for freedom —freedom from duty, from responsibility— now—oh! for any cords that would tie her down!—oh! for any voice which she could obey!

And then once more the sense of her misery came over her — her utter impotence, her utter hopelessness of life or happiness ever again. And as she woke up to it, the imperative necessity of action struck her. No money—no warm clothes—what should she —what could she do?

The house loomed there, and the shadows of figures on the window in Saltichus' room showed that the assemblage was not yet broken up. She would go home first, then—and fetch money—then she should not be so utterly helpless—with fleet steps she crossed the meadow-land—started at the sound of her own tread on the gravel in the garden, gained the drawing-room window, and felt her way with swift precision through the room, by the dim light of the breaking dawn.

At the bottom of the stairs there was Fritz, the man-servant. He was waiting in frightful uncertainty, and had sat down till Randolph or some one should return. On seeing Clara, he started, and rose, with pale haggard face and weary eyes staring at her, questioningly.

Would he tell of her? would he give her up?

She put her finger to her lips, and passed him with beating heart, on her way upstairs.

But danger was not over yet. There in her own room, dressed in a heap of clothes, that had been hurriedly thrown on, sat her maid. Clara shrank back, she had expected to find the room empty.

The woman got up slowly—with blank staring face.

"Go and tell Fritz not to sit on the staircase like that, Anna. He had better go back to bed. And you, Anna, go to your room till I call you!"

Her presence of mind served her well, and the maid went away, closing the door after her without a word.

Clara stood for a second leaning on the dressing-table, appalled at the sight of her own face in the glass. And then, with a heavy heart, and lingering fingers, that dwelt fondly on objects till now but lightly regarded, she made some preparations. It must all be left—this likeness, that present, that foolish little basket that she had had all her life—

they all reproached her, they all seemed to rebuke her,—they all seemed to have detached themselves from her, and to be part and parcel of her no more. The very walls seemed to frown upon her, and the creeper that tapped noisily in the morning breeze on the window pane seemed to repeat again and again a triumphant farewell. And yet she had tended it! and once, weary of it and its fair languid beauty in the heavy summer days, she had hated it; and now—it had its revenge!

Never to live here more! never to hear the birds sing in the ivy tree outside—to leave all—all—for ever!—

And she must go! She had found her purse now, she had collected some jewels that were hers before she married, she had clothed herself warmly—yes! nothing more to do—she must go! A moment more of hesitation and delay might ruin her—even take from her such liberty and such self-

respect as she still had left—destroy the faint hope she yet had of saving her husband and his name from disgrace—Yes! she must go—she must begin to play her part of outcast and wanderer—and bear all as bravely as she might.

Down the stairs, swiftly, softly—Oh! those things are easily done—people are glad enough to let you go, and pass from among them, and be lost—when you are disgraced, and can hold up your head no longer!

In the drawing-room she dared to pause—It was so hard to leave it all. There was the piano, where she had played so many hours long. How sweet and radiant they seemed to her now, seen through the vista of bitterness and pain: and there the sofa, where Saltichus, and Guy, and George had lounged, looking at her—and listening to her songs. And there the seat in the window—where she had sat, waiting and thinking, and longing for life! and, as she thought, suffer-

ing! Ah! what would she not give now for those past days of peace. And there was the picture—hers—painted to please George—she looked at it wondering—was that her? smiling, gay, trustful, beautiful, and happy. And now?

She could look no longer. Gathering her bundle under her arm, she stepped out to go away, and began walking swiftly. Her heart was very heavy, her face was fixed and colourless; and she never raised her eyes from the ground as she walked. To her, the very hedge-rows and well-known trees and lanes seemed hostile; the old light shone on them no more. The paths in the woods, the waving boughs over her head, the breaking light of the rising sun, all seemed to be imbued with some new spirit, to her unknown—to be part of another world, to which she was a stranger.

At last, she reached a wood, and, utterly weary and broken-spirited, she lay down on

the ground, and seemed to herself to lay her troubles at rest for a while beside her.

It was a thick wood, and was not very far from Bloemenhof. You would pass it on your way to Ryssenwyk—but hardly any one ever went through it, except perhaps Roeland, when he was shooting.

Clara was broken down, faint, and miserable. She would like to die! She would stay there on the ground—at last, more faint, more hungry, she must die! She would be better so!

At length, the sun, high in the heavens, sent his beams through the thick foliage that had screened her, and she woke to a sense of discomfort, and of the necessity of moving. She rose; but stiff and weary and cramped, walking seemed impossible.

Seeing a stile on the outskirts of the wood, she rested herself there. Beyond was a narrow sand-lane, unfrequented and solitary. Clara thought then that she did not care

whether she was found or seen or not. She wanted to die, she thought.

A horse's hoof on the soft soil—she raised her head indifferently, to see Adrian van Bruynesteyn before her, checking his horse, when, to his surprise, he saw who it was.

"Mrs. Randolph!" exclaimed he—and he jumped to the ground, throwing the reins over his shoulder, and making a step towards her.

"Why do you speak to me?" asked she, ceding to her state of utter misery, and never trying to deny it.

Adrian paled. He had not believed the rumour till now. But he recovered himself.

"I have something for you."

She stared at him—looking and waiting because he said so, but not expecting or hoping for anything good now for her.

"I was on my way to your house. I was wondering how I should speak to you and see you alone." Then he drew a tiny parcel from his pocket, and put it into her hand. "Madame van Franckenburg asked me to give you this in the greatest secrecy."

"From Lisa!" she stammered.

A breath of life seemed to come to her, after death and darkness and utter hopeless despair.

Then she took it, half afraid.

"Will you not open it?"

She stared at him, like some senseless creature, or like one who only half understood.

"You had better open it!" said he, in strong clear accents.

Then she opened it.

A small jewel-case, wrapped in a piece of paper, and on the paper, traced in pencil, the words:

"Say I lent it you, Clara.

LISA."

She opened the case :

The blue diamond !

A thousand tints and lights gleamed from it as she looked down upon it.

She stared from it to Adrian, and from Adrian to it—in utter amazement.

And Adrian was as astonished as herself.

"I did not know what I was bringing you. She only said it was of great value, and she did not know who to trust. So I offered !"

"Why ?"

"I am her husband's friend, and I wanted to win her favour. She has never liked me !"

"And Roeland ?"

"He knows nothing of this !"

"Take it back to her at once !" said Clara,

hastily wrapping it up, and putting it eagerly out of her sight.

"I cannot. She expected that. She said I was not to take it again!"

Clara stared at him in dismay.

"Ah! did she trust me so—yet, knowing all? Oh, Lisa! Lisa—you are good!"

The tears, too long refused, welled out at last—and Adrian stood by an unwilling yet compassionate spectator of the outburst. Such utter misery he had never seen before.

And then words came again:

"This from Lisa!"

Clara Randolph could not believe it.

This, from the long-suffering, much-sinned-against Lisa! This, from the woman she had envied and hated, and whose very happiness she had hoped to destroy!

At last the paroxysm spent itself, and she stood by Adrian more calm.

"You will not take it back?" she asked, again offering him the diamond.

"I dare not. It would be forfeiting my promise to her."

"She meant to save me. She meant me to say it was her diamond all the time—and she would have said so too! It is too late for that. My disgrace and ruin are complete. This is the last time I shall hear a friend's voice here perhaps. But tell her from me that she has saved me—from myself, I mean. She has made me desire to live, and to be forgiven, and to wish to be good once more —to be like her. It is strange, to wish for anything. I never thought I should again!"

Adrian strove to comfort her—murmured something about life and God—about heaven —and her own good husband.

"None of that is for me. But I shall try now—to live. Tell her she has saved me. Trust does more good than anything else in the world, for it makes us hate sin. People like Lisa are angels in the world! I

shall bring her back or send her back her diamond somehow. Tell her it is safe. Tell her how I thank her. If Roeland hears, tell him all—and don't let him mistrust her."

"And what will you do now?"

"I do not know yet—" said she simply—"but I think now that God is there just the same as He used to be when I was a child. I had lost Him till Lisa's message came. Ah! where is it?—her written word—I must keep that safe, for fear I lose Him again. Goodbye."

He shook her by the hand, and mounting his horse, rode sadly back by the way he had come.

Clara sat awhile on the stile thinking. Now she heard the birds sing again, now the sun shone out, and the clouds sailed overhead as they used. A shadow had fallen from her spirit.

Footsteps approaching down the lane. She

must hide. She slipped down from her seat and hid among the bushes.

Randolph passed with bowed head, and face of utter misery and dejection.

No! she could not cry, or call. Her tongue clove to her mouth, and refused to do its office. For very pity and shame she could make no sign.

His steps died away; and alone once more she felt she must go somewhere, do something.

A cock crowing at Jan Krusemann's farm across the fields sounded cheerful and homelike. Might she not go there? The old woman had always been kind to her—she had some money to repay her for shelter for some days at least. She was less likely to be sought for so near at home. They would expect her to go to Amsterdam or to England.

In the strong sunshine of the bright morning, there she stood at the door of the farm-

house, and Vrouw Krusemann looked doubtfully upon her.

"You won't turn me away, Vrouw Krusemann?"

The old woman did not answer.

"I don't deserve it I know. But I am so weary and ill, and I have been near dying."

Vrouw Krusemann threw open the door, and Clara walked in.

The farm-maidens got up as she passed through. They had all heard now. They knew not what to say. They looked upon her as an object of curiosity. How different from the respect of former days! Clara's heart sank within her. She almost wished she had not come. The very cows in their stalls turning their heads lazily round, seemed to her to despise her.

Into a little upstair room Vrouw Krusemann took her.

"I do not know what Jan will say!"

"Jan will forgive you."

There for days, never stirring out, never seeing any one, scarcely caring to rise from her bed—jealously guarded, and jealously cared for, by the faithful, kind-hearted old Dutchwoman, Clara Randolph stayed.

CHAPTER XV.

"All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride,
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently, I went my way."

SHELLEY.

WHAT a fund of material for Mrs. Grundy. How she mumbled it between her old teeth, and how her wrinkled old face expanded and shrivelled itself up again in a thousand expressions of delight over the tale. How Society shrugged its shoulders with an "I told you so," "I

always wondered," or "We might have known it." How Randolph's enemies listened with greedy smiles to the story, and hugged themselves in delight "that his abominable sin should be found out."

How the Court marvelled over it, and how those who had not made the Randolphs' acquaintance congratulated themselves on their penetration, and how those who had washed their hands of them for evermore, and took a pleasure in enlarging on the subject in casual conversation, with a thousand facial contortions, and adding many decorations and incidents to the tale that, until now, had not been commonly known. How, when someone tried to set the tune in another key and exonerate George from blame, how soon pity for him was drowned in the heinousness of the crime, and in wonder at the nature of the man who could have borne the companionship of such a woman.

"He could not have been perfectly up-

right, perfectly honourable; he could not, at least, have absolutely hated deceit or fraud, or he could never have tolerated—certainly never could have married—a woman with such a disposition as that."

They gave him the cold shoulder, and, on principle—for is it not a duty?—they took care not to see him if he came close. If the width of the street happened to be between them, so that the cut was neither quite so direct or so patent—so much the better for him.

What interest it gave to conversation in The Hague that winter! How late people stayed on staircases just to say a few last words on the subject. What intense thrills of pleasure shot through them if anything new was reported as having come to light. What numbers of people thronged to Amsterdam to see the diamond cutting.

How disappointing it was that that charming romantic Dino should have gone off no

one knew where, without anyone having been able to see him or his diamond first, and without his being able to tell them any more about John Lord or his old love in Borneo.

Would he now go back to Borneo, they wondered, and would the girl see Dino again, and again have her little mis-shapen gold ring, that had been beaten out of a golden nugget by Dino's hand?

And the police officer was gone too. Would he marry some dark-eyed beauty, and live on the proceeds of his desertion, in one of those languid summer islands, set in the bright blue southern sea?

With what reverential interest diamonds themselves came to be regarded by the youngest *débutante* in fashionable circles.

"Why, the woman must have had the stolen diamond in her head actually when she was talking to the Queen."

"What impudence!"

"What hardened impertinence!"

"Perhaps she has stolen a great many things before."

"Oh! of course."

"And her husband was probably an accomplice."

"Yes. That explains her expensive dress, and his success."

"Her father, too,—judging by the story Van Franckenburg told us about the land where the treasure was hidden—her father was not one of the most honourable of men."

"What—Vincent! No; I should think not, indeed. Her coming of that stock explains a great deal."

"He and his wife are leaving Holland, though. Mr. Bradlaw said he should not require his services any longer."

"Really! There was a talk once of this woman marrying Roeland van Franckenburg. What an escape for him."

"Yes, indeed. Ah! these money-making English; they must be avoided."

The stolid Dutchmen shook their heads again and again over it all, and their tongues wagged the faster as the hideousness of the crime became exposed to view.

And not the Dutch alone: the English, too, did not forget to throw any stone that might come to hand at the fallen victims.

"Didn't I tell you so? Am not I a true prophet?" asked Mr. Bradlaw of Guy Travers. "Has she not pulled him down? and did not you say he would elevate her. Ho! ho! ho! I laugh when I think of it."

Guy turned away in disgust.

"And you, too, Mr. Travers," said Bradlaw, pursuing him. "I am sorry."

But there was a twinkle of triumph in his eye. The patrician had fallen—his father was not an honourable man; he had tried to evade the law, he had tried to disown his wife and his first-born child, and now he was

punished. Truth will out to the end of the chapter. Plumes and sable are fine things, but if they are soiled, and only cover wounds and sores, it is finer to be free of them. For him, he was but a plebeian, but his hands were clean, at least, and he looked approvingly at his fat, red, much-bedizened fingers ere he spoke again.

"Who would have thought it? Saltichus to be your brother!"

Mr. Bradlaw must be forgiven. The whole district had rung with the cry of wonder. This the end of the mystery. The haughty, impassible, cold Hector Saltichus to be the brother of the warm-hearted Guy Travers. It was wonderful indeed.

"It was curious how we found one another."

"What will he do! what will you do?"

"My father will see him. I think he will make him an allowance; he has been looking for him for many years, you know."

"Ah!" said Bradlaw, as if he did not believe it.

"He should never have run away from home."

"Oh, well! a worm will turn, you know. And he always meant to come back, I suppose. And," went on Mr. Bradlaw, with a sort of vulgar curiosity, anxious to see how fashionable people managed these sort of things, "will he live there—with you?"

"Not with me, certainly," said Guy, his head in the air. "Nor, I think, will my father care to *live with him* after—this."

"Ah! ah! I see. Beg pardon. It *was* dirty."

"He is more than revenged," said Guy, quietly; "and, of course, now he will be acknowledged, and must succeed over my head."

Then Guy, thinking the subject done with, walked away.

In truth, it was bitter suffering.

Randolph, who had risen so high, to have fallen thus—yet by no fault of his. Oh! Guy would always remember that!

Saltichus—who had begun to make himself a name in Holland, by his talent, his pure ambition, by his hospital, by his interest in his profession, and the self-denying labour he spent on his poorer patients—now to be a laughing-stock and a by-word, and to have dragged him down with him.

One thing Guy had been proud of—his old unspotted name. Poverty he had brooked, work he had welcomed, but now shame on his father's house, and his own honoured name—oh! it was too hard. He buried his face in his hands, and leaned on the table in the office, giving way to his sorrow to the full.

The door opened and Van der Pyl entered.

"Travers," said he, speaking with effort, "will you tell Mr. Randolph something for me?"

"Yes."

"I do not want to hurt his feelings. I must go away; I cannot work here any longer."

"Very well."

"You see I am Dutch, and my friends——"

"Yes; I see," said Guy, starting up in a fit of uncontrollable indignation. "You suspect Randolph and myself — you suspect everything English, in fact. Oh! I see it all. You had better go."

"My dear Travers——"

"Oh! nonsense! it is useless. Is there anything else to say?"

"That is my address at Amsterdam."

He gave it him.

"All right. Good day to you."

For how many months had they daily worked together, every thought, every hope, every scheme in common! And this was the end of it.

Later, Mr. Bradlaw and Mr. Bennett and Heer van Naarden came to Guy.

"Mr. Travers, we have been thinking it over. We had been advised to say to our old and valued friend, George Randolph, that we do not require his services any longer; but, after all, Mr. Travers, that seems to us useless severity; and we are human."

"I do not see how you will finish the works off without him," said Guy, quickly.

"Oh! ah! of course! That is a different matter. But to look at it from a higher—point. He has done nothing. He is as pure, as upright, as honourable as ever. Why should he suffer for a woman's crime?"

"Why?" said Mr. Bennett.

"The Vincents are gone, or going—Dr. Saltichus has gone—the wife, the woman who did the thing, seems lost and disappeared."

"Why?"

"Why?" echoed Heer van Naarden.

"So will you tell him, with our kindest regards—tell George I mean—that we hope this sad disaster will make no difference——"

"George is very proud," said Travers. "I am not sure. . . ."

"Ah! but he must stay," said Heer van Naarden. "We cannot do without him."

"I will tell him that," said Guy, smiling.

"He is so great, so clever . . . ."

"Hush! my dear friend," said Mr. Bennett, nervously.

"Oh! never fear, Mr. Bennett," said Guy, "a kind word when a man is down does him no harm."

"Then you think he will stay?" asked Mr. Bradlaw.

"I cannot say."

"No one would ever have the same influence over the men," whined Mr. Bennett.

"I will ask George."

Guy got up wearily.

"It has been too sad," said Mr. Bradlaw. "Just as we were getting on, works finished, reclamations wonderfully advanced, houses springing up, hospital built——"

And then he stopped and smiled.

There had been so much sarcastic talk about that hospital and the attendant psalm-singing and devout exercises, that it was dangerous ground.

Soon after they took their leave, and Guy, feeling suffocated and dejected, went out into the air.

There, in the sunlight, sat Mrs. Lord; her brother was working in the garden, talking to her all the time.

"Why, Jane, you are the happiest of us all, I do believe!" said Guy, trying to be cheerful.

"Oh! sir. You are all so kind. Mr. Roeland has been here, and his lady and all. And poor Mr. Randolph came by, sir, once; and I stopped him. Oh! sir His poor face

did make my heart bleed. Will she never be found, do you think?"

"I do not know. Perhaps it would be better not, Jane!"

"Oh! sir. No, no; you must not say that. To lose anyone and never know is so awful. Oh! know the worst and bear it—it is easier—much."

"Poor Jane!"

"And you, sir! you look bad enough. Can't I do anything for you, sir? Oh! if I could only make you all happy again, and get you to smile again as you used to do. I don't do much of it myself, but I feel very quiet and peaceful-like, to what I used to be."

John Meadows looked up and smiled at her.

"Ah! Janet—we'll be off to England soon now—together."

"Yes, Jack, I hope so. Was he really your brother, sir?"

"My half-brother, Jane."

"Ah! that's a mighty difference, though. And where is he, sir?"

"In London, I think; and my father is there, too; and oh! Jane, I pray I may never see him again."

"And so do I, sir; that I do."

CHAPTER XVI.

"And all is past: the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives; do thou for thine own soul the rest."

IDYLLS OF THE KING.

LISA VAN FRANCKENBURG coming in at the hall-door on one of those autumn afternoons, saw the figure of a man approaching the house by the avenue. Idly wondering who it could be, she lingered on the steps. Not that she was very curious, or very anxious for visitors, but of late she had been meditative and absent; her step had been heavy, and there had seemed a weight and an oppression on

her life. Her daily pursuits had been laid aside, her former interests abandoned.

As the figure came nearer, she saw that it was George Randolph, and then an instinctive awkwardness induced her to enter the house and screen herself from his view. They had not met since the accusation against Clara had startled everyone. From one of the windows of the hall she could see him approaching, without herself being seen.

A thousand conflicting emotions were battling for the mastery in Randolph's mind as he walked. In truth, he had come to Bloemenhof in the very bitterness of his solitude, and in the weariness of bearing his burden; he had come to know if he had one friend left, and, if so, to hear that friend's voice.

Of late he had been travelling to and fro, inquiring here, instituting search there, never resting, ever on the alert, always seeking that poor lost wife of his. The detectives had

sought, and so had he, and hitherto all were baffled. Now, on his return from Rotterdam, he had heard of the reports about the works; Guy had talked to him, had told him of Van der Pyl's desertion, and of the contractor's wish that he, George, should stay. In his heart, he wanted to stay. He thought he should find Clara sooner by staying; he hated leaving his work unfinished. Let that, at least, stand clear and unspotted before the world, and before his workmen. Let not the stain ruin that.

But his ear longed for one word from a friendly voice, for one word of impartial judgment. Till now, he had seen no one but Guy, and Guy's spirit was bitter and sore as his own. He was hardly capable of giving sound advice. Besides, Guy meant himself to stay, and was therefore very urgent that George should; too urgent, perhaps, for George to reason coolly on the subject. It would not be for long. A few months would

finish the work, and then, indeed, he would be free, and at least that one action would have been honestly done in life. If he could see Roeland—just once—hear Roeland, and what Roeland thought of his future in Holland—then it would be easier for him. But would Roeland see him now? The Van Franckenburgs were so proud. . . . Lisa herself he never dreamed of seeing. How could she stop to speak to him now? Was not he shunned, avoided, despised by everyone now? Was he not regarded as a loathsome object—almost as a leper in the olden time! Oh! no; he could never hope to look on sweet Lisa van Franckenburg's pure face again.

Thus, musing bitterly, he ascended the steps—slowly, stopping now and again, with bent head, and nervous hesitating gait. Lisa watched him from behind the flowers in the hall.

Then she saw him draw a card from his

pocket, before he raised his arm to reach the bell.

"What!" thought she to herself, a sudden sense of pity, and an instinct of how matters stood with him, rushing to her heart—"George afraid of us—afraid to come in. To send a card, when he used, at Lindehout, to come and to go—unbidden, unsought!"

She stepped to the door, and, confronting him with a smile and frankly-extended hand, warmly welcomed him.

"Lisa!" he exclaimed in his surprise.

How weary, how worn he looked! Dark rings round his eyes, and his white cheeks told too well of past anxiety and sorrow.

"I knew it was you. I saw you coming. Come in!"

She threw the door open, and he stepped in.

"You have been a long time coming to your friends, George!"

Just because he was so miserable, she could afford to be liberal with kind words to-day.

To him, it was indeed a "coming home." After much tossing, rest; after long suffering, cessation of pain for a moment; after burning thirst, a draught of pure water; after torturing self accusation, peace and oblivion; after long tension, utter freedom.

For, sitting together in Lisa's little boudoir, they went over it all. His suspicion, Clara's ambition, the dreadful ending—and, since that, his weary search. And of Guy, too, he talked. What relief it was to pour it all into her ear! to put it all away, and let it all be soothed to rest by her calm spirit, that seemed to brood over it just to instil peace into it.

"And you will stay with us, George, and finish your work here, at least?"

"Shall I?"

"If Mr. Travers does, and Mr. Travers is right."

"Ah! but then he wants to keep away from home now. He wants to avoid Saltichus."

"Will he live at his home?"

"No! not till he succeeds to the property, and that is unavoidable, I fancy. But at present he must be at least seen, and Guy does not want to see him."

"He ought not to prosper, after all he has done!"

"Yet he has suffered much; and the name of Travers, will hardly bring him prosperity yet!"

Then they were silent for awhile, till Lisa said suddenly:

"But you too have a reason for staying in Holland, George. You must find Clara!"

He was utterly dejected; he needed comfort, and Lisa found her words were all too weak.

"You must not give way so, my friend. You know we will all help you. We have all been so sorry . . . . . I have been so sorry . . . . ."

He took her hands in his gratitude.

"You do me good. You are my guardian-angel. You always have been . . . . ."

Lisa thought of a past now long ago, when such words as these would have been music in her ears. Now, they were but as faint echoes from a distant shore, unheeded, scarcely valued. She was comforting an old friend, that was all! bringing him some peace, if God would let her. He looked up with a sad smile, smiling half at her own coolness, half at his excitement, and saw . . . . . Roeland, silent and frowning, standing just within the door, facing her and Randolph.

He had just come down from Lisa's dressing-room; he had gone there for an old necklace which she desired to have set in another way, and he was to take it to a

jeweller's for her. She had sent him for it, quite thoughtlessly, and he had found the blue diamond gone.

Confounded, he knew not what to think. It was so hard to have to mistrust Lisa. And yet . . . . . suspicion upon suspicion crossed his mind ; had she helped Saltichus ? was *the* diamond his, the Van Franckenburg diamond, all the time ? had she helped these guilty Randolphs ? was she, after all, making a tool of him—her husband—for the sake of that old love of hers ? oh ! it was too horrible !

He rushed downstairs to his wife's boudoir, opened the door softly—for he heard voices —and there saw her sitting on a sofa close to that old love of hers, her hands in his, and he breathing in passionate utterances that she was his guardian-angel now, and always had been !

He gazed at her—hurt and utterly amazed. Of course, she had given them

the diamond. That was how she was the guardian-angel.

"Oh! Roeland!—here is George: he has come to us at last. Speak to him, and comfort him, Roeland!"

Then George crossed over the room towards him.

But Roeland stood still, his hands behind him, and a pained, angry, expression on his face.

Both George Randolph and Lisa were frightened, and Randolph stopped short a pace or two from Roeland.

"I see, Van Franckenburg, you cannot speak to me. I do not wonder!"

"What is it, Roeland, what is the matter?"

And then Lisa blushed crimson, hating the thought that had come to her. Roeland must have seen Randolph's action, and he had misinterpreted it. How could she explain?

They all three stood looking at one another in silence.

At last Roeland spoke, making an effort over himself:

"Then come to me, Lisa! Look! I forgive you, child!"

She looked up at him again, frightened; and Randolph, catching sight of her face, caught, too, the thought that engrossed her.

"No! no!" said he vehemently; "it is not as you think—you mistake."

Roeland questioned him with his eyes haughtily.

"Madame van Franckenburg was letting me tell her all—was kind—was good as ever—was saying she would help to find . . . . . Clara—again."

The name cost him an effort. He stopped. Roeland smiled icily.

"I beg your pardon," said he, as he looked from one to the other.

"Roeland, this is dreadful. I cannot bear this."

Lisa turned away to stare at the fast-falling twilight, and to hide a sob that would not be suppressed.

Just then she caught sight of a face outside the window—a woman's face, a woman's figure shrouded in black. She let fall a thick veil when she saw that Lisa had seen her.

"Madame van Franckenburg was telling me not to leave Holland, but to stay and finish my work, and to find my wife," George was saying; but Lisa was not listening to him.

With a feverish hope at her heart, she passed out of the room, and again stood on the steps outside the hall-door.

"Clara!" said she.

A moment she waited, and the silence seemed intense. Then, from underneath the great cedar-tree, Clara suddenly appeared. But she stood, hesitating, doubting.

"Come," said Lisa, impatiently.

"May I?" asked the other.

A moment more, and Lisa was leading her in, across the hall into Bloemenhof.

"Lisa! dear Lisa! I must see you in private."

"Hush! they will hear you. Hush! I was not alone."

But Lisa's warning came too late. George had heard the well-known voice. The boudoir-door opened, and there, on the threshold, excited, trembling, like a man in a dream, he stood.

Clara hid her face, and cowered away from before him.

Roeland's clear voice sounded first.

"You had better come in here, Lisa, if you would be undisturbed?" And he waited with the door wide open for them as he spoke.

So Lisa passed in, still holding Clara

Randolph's hand, and then George followed.

"Won't you come, too, Rocland?" asked Lisa.

Then he came in.

Clara put up her veil, and showed a face the very picture of remorse and despair.

"You should not hold my hand, Lisa. You should not touch me," said she, speaking gravely. "I am so unworthy. I did not come to trouble you with any ghostly resurrection. I am going away. You will never see me any more. I shall pass away from among you all, and you will forget you ever saw me, if indeed you can forget the act that I committed. I have waited so long to give you this: I thought I should never see you."

Then she brought the little case out of her pocket, and opening it, set the blue diamond on the table.

Roeland and Randolph started, bewildered.

"Thank you, Clara," said Lisa, simply.

They all waited, hungry for more words.

"You saved me, Lisa. Did he tell you?"

"Yes. Adrian van Bruynesteyn told me what you said. It was nothing that I did, Clara. Anyone would have done it."

Clara stared at her.

"Do you know what she did?" she asked, turning round to Roeland. "No? Ah! you do not know her yet. She gave me her diamond—thought to save me so; trusted me, a thief, with it, to help me who had never helped her; risked all for me; risked your displeasure, your misinterpretation should you miss it. Oh! Lisa—you are noble!"

Roeland coloured, and beat his head. Crossing to his wife, he put out his hand:

"Can you forgive me, Lisa?"

She put her fingers into his.

"I did not dare tell you."

"And yet I would have let you do it, Lisa."

"No: you would not. You think so now, because there it is. But you would not."

Lisa found time to laugh in his eyes even then: and he shrugged his shoulders as Dutchmen do, as though he did not agree with her.

"But why don't you speak to me?" exclaimed Clara. "You let me come and stand among you as though I had done nothing? Are you going to send me to prison that you are all so quiet? I am going away now for ever. Have you no word for me to take with me—not even an unkind one?"

All this time she had not dared look at George.

"Clara, you cannot go like that," said Lisa taking her hands.

"Why not? No; I know; I must not be found. I must be punished. But have I not suffered? Still, I know what you would say, and I must hasten and make my escape."

"But you have other duties first."

"What duties? I have no duties left. I have forfeited every duty—nothing more to do . . . nothing . . . no one."

George was coming close to her.

Lisa felt her shrinking back.

"There is your duty, Clara," said Lisa firmly, and she placed her hand in Randolph's as she said the words.

"I have found you, wife, at last. Now we will wander together as we used to dream we would, in days long past."

Was this a dream? Clara could not believe, could not understand. She listened—dazed. At last she looked up, like a blind person might to whom a glimmer of light is dawning, and she murmured, in a hoarse unnatural startled voice:

"Forgiven?"

"Ay. Forgiven—as far as we can forgive."

"Yes. Forgiven, Clara," said Lisa. "You will turn the new page for George, will you not?"

Lisa's voice died away, and then Randolph spoke:

"And so we go, wife? we pass away together?"

"What! before our harbour is done?" queried Lisa, calling in lightness to dissimulate deeper feelings.

Randolph hesitated.

"George," said Clara, speaking quickly, "you say you have forgiven me. But it can not be. Such acts as mine cannot be passed over like this. I am not fit now to come to you—not again to be in your house and home. Send me away now, hide me where you will. But finish your work here; show them, at least, how great *you* are. By-and-

by, when it is done, come for me, and, if you will, try me again, and let me be your wife."

"She speaks well," said Roeland. "George, do as she says. Old friend, already the future looks hopeful."

"If so, Lisa put the hope there," said Clara, "and for Lisa's sake, it must be fulfilled."

So they passed out of Bloemenhof together, and Roeland and Lisa stood watching them, till, in the dim twilight, their figures looked faint and wraith-like.

"Little wife," whispered Roeland, "I was unjust: have you forgiven me?"

"I was wrong not to trust you, Roeland. I think it was the only time that I have not."

"Oh! you are not perfect, by any means."

He pulled her hair playfully as he spoke.

"And you, with your doubtful politics, and getting applause for all sorts of nonsensical

talk, do you think you are perfect? But seriously, Roeland, everybody has been trying their luck at such risks, it was time for my turn to come. I was obliged to do something. The wonderful buried treasure seems really lost now, does it not?"

"Yes, indeed; and it seems to have brought little gain to those who sought for it so desperately."

"But Clara's story is the saddest of all. After all, Roeland, I think I have succeeded better than any one else, for is not your foot on the first rung on the ladder of fame? Does not everyone say you are really going to be a great man now? and whose doing is it, I should like to know? And—I used to think it so hopeless."

In comic triumph she appealed to him for confirmation to her words.

"Oh! you always had a wonderfully silly way of doing disagreeable things that were quite useless, I know," said Roeland, "just

as you have of saying disagreeable things in a wonderfully pretty and silly way. As for me, I may be thankful that this generation of Van Franckenburgs have not lost the blue diamond through your sweet spirit of self-sacrifice. What will be your next freak, I wonder?"

"Oh! it will be your turn next, Rocland, and may you be as successful as I was! We often do win when we think we are going to lose everything for the sake of other people. I have often found it so. Just as often many people lose, when they think they are going to win by meanly stepping into another person's place, or taking some advantage their position gives them. It is right they should lose then."

Rocland only answered Lisa's philosophy with a smile. Her debate on the laws of Chance and Justice amused him.

"Rocland!" she whispered a moment later; "it will be all right yet. Clara and George

will be happy together now. I am glad I sent the diamond. That brought her to me, and so I was able to give her back to George."

So, through it all they went. It had been endless; but Guy, seen approaching in the distance, turned their thoughts into a new direction, and they went forward to welcome him, their minds full of the hope of reconciling him to his new position.

And I, who have written this story, thinking how all those who played for self, lost, and how Lisa, who played always for others, and who made up her mind to risk all and to lose all for others, won—how the dazzling stake played for by so many was lost, and at what cost,—I, struck by the seeming contrariety of things was incited thus to mark Lisa's winning stroke, and beg to augur certain triumph and a good score to all those who will be content like Lisa, to play a straightforward independent game, not trusting as the others did on

adversaries' balls to reach the pocket, and thinking to win by what turned out in truth to be only "A Losing Hazard;" but rather play as honour bids, serenely defiant alike of loss or gain, so only that the game be good and fair; and, strange to say (or so Lisa said), by this system the term changes as the game progresses, and the player scores in the place of a "Losing," the higher figure that marks a fuller triumph, and that even in the game of life might be called, "A Winning Hazard."

THE END.

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